

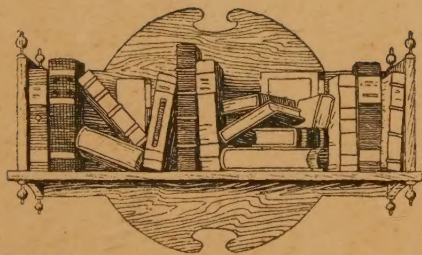


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FROM DOUBLE EAGLE  
TO RED FLAG

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VOLUME ONE



# FROM DOUBLE EAGLE TO RED FLAG

By *Krasnov, Petr Nikolaevich*

GENERAL P. N. KRASSNOFF

26-12569

*Translated from the Second Russian  
Edition by Erik Law-Gisiko*

*With an Introduction by*  
WILLIAM GERHARDI



VOLUME ONE

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## INTRODUCTION

*There is a notion abroad that a preface must needs be unreservedly laudatory. An unhealthy delusion! A preface should, for the most part, be critical and explanative. Here is a book—a provocative document that cannot be launched into a complacent Anglo-Saxon world without some sort of an explanation. Then let me attempt one. "From Double Eagle to Red Flag" was born of the debris of Imperial Russia, conceived in the shadow of Leo Tolstoy's historical narrative, by a Russian General with exceptional opportunities, an expert on his subject (and that is what makes it so interesting), possessed of keen observation and uncommon literary skill. It is, in the nature of things, monumental; not unlike the London Albert Memorial. And withal the book has a stark, a naked, a terrible fascination. I confess I could not put it down.*

*What is its hold? Some will say it is art: the grandiose, leisurely novel dealing with Russian reality true to type: "War and Peace" brought up to date. Others will say it's photography. Others again, that it is Victor Hugo at his best. Never mind what they say—start at the beginning, read twenty pages, and you will not stop till you have come to the end. This, say what you will, is an achievement of which the author, the meditative Don Cossack General, Peter Krassnoff, may be justly proud. I venture to prophesy a large public for this epic historical novel covering a quarter of a century—our quarter. And who will deny historical magnitude to our days?*

*Oh, the great Russian soul! Oh, the colossal Russian mind! It is overwhelming. It is like some gigantic machine of marvellous design and construction—with a hitch that prevents it from working; like a born orator, with an impediment in his speech. Russia will not change. There will arise some new Peter the Great, who will conceive a new plan, let us say, for*

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*electrifying the whole of Russia, with a stroke of the pen. On the margin of the ministerial report he will write the words: "Electrify Russia at once." And the contractors will duly bribe the authorities and supply rotten material, get rich, and the scheme will be crippled at birth. In this lies the humor and genius of the race. It needed a Chehov to see it, a Chehov who seemed a little weary of people knocking at the window of his bedroom at about half past two in the morning, anxious for a "soul-to-soul" talk. A Chehov who walked a little outside and beside life. Here you get it all—the unashamed, frank, childish account of it, with a perfect absence of guile, by a nice, well-meaning military gentleman who indeed has never stepped outside it. An officer who is trying to tell you how different it would have been had the other officers of the Guards been a little different to the soldiers. I don't know. I have a sneaking feeling that it becomes so gross and low-brow a thing as an army to have low-brow ruffians to direct it. If the officers turned philosophers, poets, or scholars, they might find themselves questioning their objective and losing interest in their work. You may entirely disregard, as I do, the political implications of this book and still feel its relative truth, as I feel it. The General has been moderate and honest—to the full capacity of his own interpretation of these terms. And who can be more? There runs through his work a doleful note, a sense of frustration and melancholy at the emptiness of "la gloire"—together with a slight irritation at the constant delay of its coming. You read and feel sorry.*

*A new Tolstoy? A new Dostoevski? No, no; spare us that. It is rather the very personal, very vivid and graphic account by an eye-witness of the things which really did happen at the Imperial Court (even the names of most of the persons are real: nothing has been hidden), of the intimate life of the officers of the Guards, of the soldiers and people, of the coming Revolution; but chiefly of the glittering life in high quarters. The central figure is the leisured aristocrat, Sablin, the dashing young guardsman par Excellence, whose life is involved, from the time of his seduction by a demi-mondaine to the day of*



## INTRODUCTION

*his death at the hand of his own son. The Emperor and Empress of Russia walk the pages again and again, looking, for all the world, thoroughly alive. The Russian Army stands before you in all its gregarious variety; the military manœuvres are painted to the life. Court functions, balls, grand dukes and foreign ambassadors, funerals, banquets, coronations, dissipations, all the resplendid regimental displays. What pomp! What descriptions! Well done, General! Moreover, there is Rasputin. There are intrigues, love of the sacred and profane variety. . . . It is as good as Zola; It is as good as Dumas—père and fils and all the lot of them put together.*

—William Gerhardt.

*London, February, 1926.*



## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE TO FOREIGN EDITION

BEFORE presenting the translation of General Krassnoff's book "From Double Eagle to Red Flag" to the English-speaking public, the translators would like to introduce the author and his work.

The well-known Russian writer Kouprin expresses his opinion of this book in the Paris newspaper "La Cause Commune" in the following terms:

"General Krassnoff has much to narrate. He has witnessed and himself taken part in many events during these terrible years, events so horrible and great, gruesome and heroic, that they would have sufficed for at least ten ordinary lives. And one must admit, judging by the first volume, that the author describes vividly and with real talent all the facts he is acquainted with and the events he has personally witnessed and experienced."

The author has had indeed exceptional opportunities for observation. A Don Cossack by birth, he began his military career as a Lieutenant in the Atamansky Guard Cossack regiment at St. Petersburg, and soon became known as a dashing cavalry officer and sportsman, and as a writer on military subjects. During the Japanese war he was at the front as a military correspondent. On his return he served in various parts of European Russia and in Siberia. The Great War found him in command of a Cossack cavalry regiment in Poland, at the head of which he won by a brilliant charge his St. George's cross. He successively commanded a cavalry brigade, a division and the famous 3rd Cavalry Corps.

When the Bolshevik revolution broke out, General Krassnoff left the North and reached the Don region after many adventures and narrow escapes. In the spring of 1918 the Don Cossacks rose against the Bolshevik rule, and the Don Parliament in its first session elected General Krassnoff Ataman of the Don. He filled this post during nine months. The situation he had

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

to face was an extremely difficult one. The Region had suffered greatly from the anarchical rule of the Bolsheviks, but in spite of this he organized a regular Don army and freed the whole of the Don Region. In the spring of 1919 he resigned under the pressure of influences foreign to the Cossacks and left South Russia. He lived for some time at Batoum, where he continued to work on the first volume of his book, which he had begun while living in seclusion in a distant Cossack village before his election as Ataman.

During his full and interesting life General Krassnoff has had the opportunity of coming into closest touch with the various classes of Russian society, and of meeting the most prominent and interesting personalities of the time. We believe that he has succeeded in giving an exact picture of the events which preceded and caused the Revolution, as well as of the chaos of ideas in Russia during the tragic reign of the Emperor Nicholas II, which was the chief cause of the terrible catastrophe.

“General Krassnoff tells us in his book many straight-forward and painful truths,” writes Kouprin. “It is necessary to note, that because of this, his book has already provoked indignation in certain circles.”

We would like to emphasize once more, that the chief interest of the book consists in its being a vivid picture of the mentality of various classes of society of the period, which led to the fall of one of the greatest Empires of the world.

It is most valuable as an historical chronicle of its time.

The book was originally published in Russia in four volumes, the first of which embraced the period from 1894 till the beginning of the Great War, the second described the war itself and the first months of the revolution up to the seizing of power by the Bolsheviks, the third, entitled “The Martyrs” dealt with the Civil war, and the fourth described life under the rule of the Bolsheviks.

We trust that the translation of this book into English will help many to gain a clearer insight into the events of the past few years in Russia.



FROM DOUBLE EAGLE  
TO RED FLAG



# FROM DOUBLE EAGLE TO RED FLAG

## PART ONE

### I

PAVEL IVANOVITCH GRITZENKO, the C. O. of the 2nd squadron, had arranged an evening in his bachelor apartments to which were invited the officers of his regiment, some of his friends from other units and two demimondaines, rising stars of the Petrograd horizon, Katerina Filipovna Fisher and Vladislava Ignatievna Pankratova—Kitty and Vladia. They were sisters, but had adopted different names for convenience. Both were young—Kitty twenty-two and Vladia only nineteen, both handsome, tall, elegantly dressed. They had begun as artists' models and then had somehow entered the Petersburg demi-monde where they had great success among the youthful guardsmen. They had finished at high school, could write a note correctly and spoke fluent French. They quickly learned to understand wine and horses and adorned by their presence many a merry meeting of bachelors.

The spring had just begun at Petersburg and the white nights were full of the fragrance of the opening buds.

Dawn was already breaking in the east lighting the whitish sky. The streets were deserted and quiet. From the Neva came the peculiar smell of water and coal and from time to time were heard the sirens of steamers.

Before the door of the officers' wing stood a closed carriage for Kitty and Vladia, and several night cabs had assembled before the lighted windows.

The rooms of Gritzenko were full of tobacco smoke. The

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host had opened the windows and through them could be heard loud conversation, laughter and constantly interrupted singing and music. The supper was already finished and two orderlies were busy clearing the wine-stained table covered with old family plate. Some of the guests were still sitting at the table, some were settled near the windows, others were walking backwards and forwards.

Gritzenko, a young cavalry captain, was carelessly stretched on a sofa, twanging a guitar. He was a handsome dark man with black slightly curling hair, big gypsy eyes and a long drooping moustache. He was dressed in trousers, small patent leather shoes and unbuttoned tunic under which a red silk shirt was seen.

Kitty in a blue silk evening gown and Vladia in a similar pink one were reclining near him. Vladia had drunk too much that evening and felt ill, but Kitty who had just reached high spirits, sang in a low voice and her large blue eyes were greedily scanning the guests.

They were all officers and all more or less known to her. Conspicuous among them was Stepan Alexeievitch Vorobieff, a short middle aged colonel, permanent member of all bachelor meetings and a passionate card player. He had a brown unhealthy looking face, as if the smoke of countless cigars and cigarettes had coloured his skin. His hair was brown and thick and he had a long moustache. He was dressed in a long tunic buttoned up to the top, long blue trousers and old boots much worn.

He walked up and down the room and kept throwing longing glances through the opened doors into the study of the host where card tables with unsealed packets of cards on them were prepared.

Captain Ivan Sergeievitch Matzneff had thrown back the curtains and was dreamily looking on the deserted boulevard and the pale sky. He was about thirty years of age, bald, clean shaven and with the reputation of a cynic and philosopher.

Lieutenant Manotskoff of the Cossack Guards was engaged in a heated dispute about the merits of his horse. He was



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sitting in a corner surrounded by young officers with glasses of champagne before them, and nervously smoked cigarette after cigarette.

In all there were about fourteen guests.

The moment had come when it was necessary either to go home or find something new to do. Vorobieff thought that it was time to proceed to the card tables—the chief reason for his presence. Drive the ladies home, entrusting them to some youngster, and then settle down to makao or chemin de fer.

But the youngsters wanted to talk and sing a little more. A considerable amount of wine had already been drunk but all were more or less sober. Less sober than any one was the host himself. He usually got merry quickly, but once having reached that state, could drink unlimited quantities and remain on the same level of loose turbulent happiness, noisy songs, violent gestures and universal amiability.

He threw aside the guitar, jumped up and shouted, his merry voice echoing through the flat.

“Zahar! Wine!”

Zahar, Gritzenko's orderly, a young, tall, handsome recruit, typically Russian, wearing a white shirt, dashed towards him with a bottle of red wine and a big glass.

A resounding smack made everyone start and turn round. Gritzenko had hit the soldier on the face.

“Animal! How long have you served me and yet you don't know the names of things!” shouted Gritzenko. “What did I ask for?”

“Wine, Your Honour,” perplexedly answered the soldier, his face growing pale.

“And you, animal, brought me pigwash! Wine means champagne, you idiot!”

“Pavel Ivanovitch,” a young voice full of sincere indignation rang from the other end of the room, “you should not hit a soldier. It is abominable, and conduct unworthy of a man of birth and an officer!”

A tall youth came forward. His ruddy face with a hardly noticeable moustache was ablaze with indignation. His large

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

dark eyes flashed angrily. His elegant figure was clad in a tunic buttoned to the very top and in tight fitting breeches. Coming up he stood before Gritzenko separating him from the completely disconcerted orderly.

"Lieutenant Sablin! You forget yourself! You are mad!" exclaimed Gritzenko stammering with anger. "How dare you criticize my conduct!" His face had become purple.

"What is it, gentlemen?" asked Colonel Vorobieff, swiftly and noiselessly approaching Sablin.

"Lieutenant Sablin!" he said "You are wrong! You have no right to make such remarks to your squadron commander. Captain Gritzenko, you acted hotheadedly when you hit your orderly. Yes, yes, but there is no reason for a quarrel. It is your own fault, Captain . . . And, gentlemen! . . . Peace . . . Well . . . peace in the name of the honour of our regiment. Shake hands . . . Well . . ."

"I cannot," said Sablin, quietly but firmly, "if he had offended me, it would have been different, but he has offended a soldier. It is himself he has offended."

But Gritzenko was resourceful.

"Zahar, come here," he said. "I hit you, I hit you lovingly, do you understand? I will kiss you,—lovingly kiss you."

And taking Zahar's cheeks in both hands he bent his head and kissed him on the lips. Then slightly pushing him away he shook his finger at him and reproachfully said:

"Ah, Zahar, Zahar. You are very trying! Remember: only champagne is called wine, everything else is pigwash. Have I not taught you this? Have I? What is tea?"

"Pigwash, Your Honour," quickly answered the soldier.

"Well, you know . . .," Gritzenko kissed the soldier again and said—"Go now."

But as soon as he turned round he shouted out.

"The singers, Zahar, and quick!" . . .

"Pavel Ivanovitch," said Vorobieff, "it is four o'clock now. The men are still sleeping and will soon have to rise for the morning work. Leave the singers alone!"

Gritzenko only smiled merrily.

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"I want! I wish—I want to show this jackanapes that the men love me and that it's nothing," he made a gesture with the hand, "they do not mind as long as they are loved and not ill-treated. That is so, dear Steepochka, and do not interfere with me. Two songs. You understand? Two songs. And he will sing to us," he laughed,—“Leo Tolstoi!”

Sablin shrugged his shoulders and strolled away. He could not be angry with Gritzenko.

### II

WHILE everyone waited for the singers, Steepochka cast annoyed glances at the ladies. They had not decided to leave at the right moment, and now the card playing was disarranged. No one wanted to play in their presence.

"Sing something, Katerina Filipovna," he said, "what is the use of sitting like this."

"Good, I will accompany on the guitar," said Gritzenko sitting down by the ladies, "Well?"

Kitty shook herself. Young, well formed, with a blush on her cheeks, she appeared very beautiful.

"Shall I sing 'The letter?'" she said.

"Good," exclaimed Gritzenko and swaying from side to side with the guitar began to play.

Kitty sang the first verse and an improvised chorus picked up its last lines.

"Excellent, bravo, bravo," shouted Steepochka.

Gritzenko, flashing his gypsy eyes, sang falsetto but very musically and correctly the second verse.

Everyone laughed and Kitty and Vladia more than anyone.

"Now let Sablin sing the Cadet song," shouted Rotbek and pulled Sablin by the sleeve towards the piano in the corner of the room.

Sablin touched several chords and the officers gathered round the piano.

The merry song rang through the room and Kitty's clear voice was distinctly heard above the deep tones of the men where the words were most risqué and suggestive.

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### III

THE singers arrived. There were twenty-five of them and a stout decorated sergeant-major. The soldiers were dressed in clean white shirts with elk-skin belts, new breeches and highly polished top boots with spurs. The sergeant was in a tunic embroidered with gold and silver chevrons, medals were on his breast and neck and a silver chain of diminutive rifles for good marksmanship hung from one of the buttons of his tunic. They brought with them the aroma of lime-trees, morning, spring and a strong smell of boot polish.

Stepochka greeted them. The choir-leader, the squadron clerk, a short young soldier with a clever malicious face, stepped forward, put his hands behind his back and put one foot forward. He had a very good tenor voice, had received a musical education and knew what he was worth. He glanced malignantly round the dining room, at the wine and the women and began to sing in a clear ringing voice which seemed to grip at one's heart. Having finished the first verse he waved his hand, turned to the choir and the clear melody speaking of the gallant deeds of old days and the glory of the regiment in many a battle, softly rang through the room.

"Now," said Gritzenko when they had finished, growing softer from the proud consciousness that they were his singers, his squadron, "you must hear a duet that our fierce Sasha Sablin will sing with Lubovin. It is as good as an opera."

"Sing Sablin."

"Sasha, sing," voices were heard.

Sablin came forward. A good musician, accustomed as a Cadet to sing in a choir, Sablin was now greatly attracted by the choir leader, Lubovin, and hoped to arrange for him to enter the Conservatoire and go on the stage. Lubovin taught him new songs.

"Let us have yours, Lubovin."

"Yes, sir."

Two voices blended together and told the sad tale of the wretched life of a peasant.

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Kitty sitting next to Steepochka, languidly stretching herself and half closing her blue eyes, fixed them on Sablin entranced by his youth, beauty and strength.

"Stepochka, dear," she whispered to Vorobieff, "it can't be true that Sablin—never, not a single time?"

"Yes, it is," said Steepochka examining the rings on her soft burning fingers.

"No? How nice! He does not know at all. Has not seen?"

"I assure you."

"What rapture, Steepochka dear, arrange this. . . Arrange that I . . . should be the first."

"Well, I will try."

"You darling!"

"Tss . . ." hissed someone.

Sablin and Lubovin were finishing their song.

Stepochka had enough of singing. It was already six o'clock. The rays of the sun were penetrating the drawn curtains and church bells were heard tolling.

"It is time to finish, Pavel Ivanovitch, and to send them to do the grooming," he said.

"One more yet. . . My favourite!" said Gritzenko.

The sergeant gave an order and the choir picked up the wide ringing notes of a sentimental song describing the death of a Cavalry commander at the head of his charging men. Gritzenko loved it all the more when he was under the influence of wine. When his men finished the song he stood up and kissed them all one after another. Tears were shining in his eyes. At that moment he sincerely loved them all. He took out twenty-five rubles and gave them to the sergeant.

"Thank you, brothers," he said in a voice which rang with feeling.

"We are happy to try," automatically shouted the singers.

"Well, go home. I cancel the morning drill, sergeant," said Gritzenko.

The choir began to leave the room and the ladies also stood up.



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"Lieutenant Sablin," said Steepochka imperatively, "accompany the ladies home."

"But . . . colonel . . ." muttered Sablin taken aback.—"I . . ."

"No 'buts' my friend. You alone do not play cards and are quite sober. March!"

Sablin clumsily walked up to the ladies and said:—"I am at your disposal."

### IV

THEY did not speak in the carriage. The air was close and smelt of perfume and wine. Vladia was very pale—the rocking of the carriage made her feel sick. Kitty felt intoxicated by the wine but even more by the vicinity of the young officer for whom she felt a sudden passion.

His noble action, his singing, youth and beauty, all this had turned her head and she passionately wished to experience his first awakened love. She could not speak, for fear of scaring him. He was evidently very shy where women were concerned and already she was thinking out a plan to make him hers.

They had not far to go and the carriage stopped in the Offiterskaya before a large house. A sleepy porter opened the wicket and they passed into the yard. Kitty rang the bell at the door of her lodging and a respectable even severe looking middle aged house maid in lace-trimmed cap and apron opened it.

Sablin wanted to take his leave.

"Where do you want to go, dear man," said Kitty, "no, come in for a moment, I have two words to write to Gritzenko. Do come."

Having taken off his coat Sablin entered the drawing room with his cap in his hands. Pale violet curtains were still drawn but behind them the sun shone brightly and spread a pleasant light through the room. A big mirror in a gilded frame was standing between the windows. On a small shelf under it stood a basket of hyacinths filling the room with a spicy scent. An-

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other big basket with the same flowers stood in a gilded flower stand near the window.

Against one of the walls stood a grand piano covered with Japanese embroideries. Over the piano hung a portrait of Kitty unskillfully drawn, evidently a first effort by an unexperienced painter.

On the piano stood photographs of Cadets and very young officers.

On the opposite wall hung another mirror and shelves with various trifles. On a round table stood a shaded lamp and albums. A sofa and several arm chairs were scattered about the room.

The whole conveyed an impression of cheap luxury but showed a certain amount of taste in the hostess.

The curtains, embroideries and armchairs were all of the same tones—pale violet and gold. The colour scheme was followed in the rug and the lamp shade.

On the mantelshef stood big photographs of the Emperor and the Empress in large frames.

Three doors opened into the drawing room. One into the small antechamber, another into the room of Vladia and the last one into the room of Kitty. That last was half closed by a Japanese curtain made out of rushes and beads.

Vladia quickly entered her room and angrily slammed the door behind her. Kitty also went to her room but did not shut the door. Sablin stood in the middle of the drawing room and felt very uncomfortable. He wanted to go but felt ashamed to do so like a thief, without saying good bye.

Kitty did not even think of writing a letter. One could hear her walking about the room evidently undressing. She approached the door and through the rushes and beads Sablin saw in the semidarkness of the bedroom a graceful shape clad in seductive linen. The fragrance of the hyacinths made him feel giddy.

Fifteen minutes passed. In Kitty's room was heard the splashing of water.



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At last noiselessly treading on the carpet she entered the drawing room.

Her golden hair was done in a fancy Greek style and was tightly wound round by blue ribbons. Her headdress reminded Sablin of some pictures of ancient Greek women he had seen.

Her face notwithstanding the sleepless night looked fresh and youthful and her eyes shone from under heavily painted lashes.

A Japanese lilac silk night gown was thrown over her shoulders and draped her graceful figure.

Catlike, with small steps she came up to the looking glass and stood proudly looking at her reflection over her shoulder in the coquettish pose of a model.

"Well, I have not been long," she said, but her eyes seemed to convey different things:—"look at me, I belong entirely to you. Take me! It is allowed," they seemed to say.

Sablin did not answer. He was breathing heavily. Blood first rushed to his face then left it quite pale. A kind of mist swam before his eyes. But more than anything else he felt confused and disconcerted. He did not know what to do with his hands and kept twitching his cap in them.

Suddenly the night gown, which was held only by a button, slipped from the shoulders of Kitty and fell round her feet. She appeared before him naked and beautiful. Slightly smiling she looked at him.

Sablin sighed but did not move. He realised Kitty's beauty, but at that moment he forgot who she was and stood admiring her perfect shape and colour as he would have admired the statue of an ancient goddess.

Kitty waited. A long minute passed. Suddenly she felt a sense of burning shame and hid her face with her hands. She looked through her fingers once more at Sablin and snatching up her night gown covered herself with it as best she could, rushed back to her room, slammed the door and twice turned the key in the lock.

Not passion but shame and discomfiture she read in the gaze of the beautiful youth, and in that moment she felt that she loved him, loved him too much to surrender so easily. If Sablin

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had now tried to enter her bed-room, had implored at her door, she would not have let him in. She was painfully ashamed and quietly sobbed in her bed, covering her head with the blanket.

Sablin stood still for a moment as if thinking something over. Everything was quiet. He entered the deserted ante-room, put on his overcoat, opened the door and quickly ran down the staircase.

### V

THE blood throbbed in his temples. He felt strong, alert. All his sleepiness had vanished. He walked swiftly with long strides. The perfume of the hyacinths and the figure of the woman seemed to pursue him. Now in imagination he pictured a very different ending to the scene in which he had just taken part.

He wished to return but felt that he could not. He pictured to himself the dark antechamber, the maid with the solemn face, and felt that he would feel only shame in that quiet drawing room full of shaded morning light, lilac tones and the scent of the hyacinths.

He breathed deeply the fresh morning air and hurried on to the barracks. When he came out on to the canal he stopped short, so beautiful did Petersburg appear. The sky was blue and the morning sun gilded the river which rippled in the fresh breeze. The dirty water looked quite blue. The turret and the porch of the German school with its background of innumerable houses stood out severely.

The hoofs of a smart grey race-horse out on its morning exercise rapped out a distinct tune on the wooden pavement, which smelled of fresh tar. Policemen in long dark overcoats walked up and down the street.

The larch trees of St. Isaacs square seemed to be the emblem of the sadness of the north. The great golden dome of the Cathedral supported by slender columns and surrounded by huge angels with torches shone out brilliantly in the sunlight. From the left side scaffoldings were clumsily built up, but Sablin liked even them. They reminded him of the days of

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his youth and without them St. Isaacs Cathedral would not seem half so dear to him.

The Alexandrovsky garden was covered by thin green needles of young fresh grass pushing their way out of the earth. From the Neva the wind seemed to bring a mighty breath of freshness, width and space. The pale sky shone through the trees of the garden and lighted the columns of the Senate, the broad building of the riding school, the Admiralty with its white facades intermixed with columns and arches.

All this was full of a peculiar fascination that morning and in a somewhat strange manner that fascination mixed itself in the mind of Sablin with the beauty of the golden haired Kitty. But by an effort of his will Sablin chased away the thought.

"Where shall I go," he asked himself. It was eight o'clock and time to go to the squadron. But the drill had been cancelled that morning. To go home, drink tea and spend the long morning till lunch time in his bachelor's den was too dreary. Sablin was passing before the door of Gritzenko. He stopped, thought for a moment and entered.

The doors were open and orderlies from the Mess were carrying out baskets with empty bottles, crockery and tablecloths.

In the dining room a samovar was boiling, throwing out clouds of smoke towards the ceiling. Zahar, who had not slept all night, was setting the table.

From the study, where, notwithstanding the broad daylight, candles were still burning and the curtains were lowered, hoarse exclamations were heard.

Gambling was proceeding at two tables. In the corner, where Gritzenko, Vorobieff and four other officers were sitting, a serious game was played and the stakes were high. A heap of gold and multi-coloured bank notes lay on the table. Manotskoff in an unbuttoned tunic with a grey face and shining eyes was standing by and greedily looking on. From time to time he took a card.

Gritzenko with the sleeves of his red shirt rolled up over the elbows was nervously shuffling the cards.

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Stepochka in a closely buttoned tunic played apparently carelessly, whistling songs and arias at the same time, but his eyes had a sharp and attentive look.

At the other table the game was less serious and only notes with chalk were made. Matzneff was at the head of this party which was composed of Rotbek, comrade of Sablin, Fetisoff, his senior by a year, and three officers of another squadron who kept making efforts to leave and go to the morning drill, but could not do so. Matzneff raised his head, looked meaningly at Sablin and exclaimed, turning the general attention to him:

"Ah! I congratulate you! But why so soon, Sasha?"

Sablin was confused, feeling the scrutiny of several pairs of suggestively curious eyes. Even Stepochka let his attention wander from the cards for a moment and said:

"You have seen them home safely?"

"Yes," said Sablin.

"And then?" asked Matzneff.

"Nothing."

"Fairy tales!"

"Fairy tales whispered the flowers to her," Stepochka sang.

"Your bet," he said to Manotskoff.

"Ten."

"Twenty-five."

Sablin was forgotten. He went into the next room, which was Gritzenko's library, took a book from one of the shelves, stretched himself on the sofa and began to read.

He read but did not understand what he was reading. He felt again the enervating perfume of the hyacinths, saw the white body; and a feeling of mixed shame and lassitude crept over him. The excitement of the sleepless night began to tell; the book fell from his hands and he dozed.

He was awakened by a hand laid upon his shoulder.

"You sleep, Sasha," said a voice and somebody sat down near him.

Sablin opened his eyes—it was Matzneff.

"What do you want?" he said, angry at being waked up.

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"Nothing or very little," answered Matzneff, "had no luck Sasha?"

"Leave me alone, Ivan Sergeievitch."

"Why? You had better follow the advice of a man experienced in these matters."

Matzneff took Sablin's hand in his.

"You don't know how to love yet," he said,—“look here Sasha . . . What a pity that you have not read Anacreon. . . . do not know Ovid. Only in the world of ancient beauty can you forget the triviality of modern life. What a pity that you are not educated. . . . Do not be angry and do not protest, my friend. Your education is the education of a light-headed girl. Not more. A little history, a little geography, a lot of patriotism, unlimited loyalty to the Emperor. . . .”

"Do not speak like this, Ivan Sergeievitch," said Sablin, freeing his hand from Matzneff's grasp.

"I know, Sasha. But remember that I can speak like this because I am myself loyal to the Monarchy and to the Monarch. Russia cannot be other than she is. But, Sasha, even I may be allowed to be melancholy and to feel other thoughts and longings. Have you read the history of the French Revolution, Sasha? Do you understand the great spirit of Napoleon? I have spent whole nights over memories of that great epoch and two worlds are comprehensible to me and seem equally worthy of imitation,—the world where the great principles of the rights of man were forged and the world of ancient beauty. Sasha, do you realise that with your great physical beauty you look like a statue of an ancient god and yet you are ignorant and understand no more of life and beauty than a young calf galloping in a field with its tail in the air?"

Sablin smiled indulgently, recalling that Matzneff had the reputation of the worst rider and officer in the regiment. No one was reprimanded so often for arriving late and being absent from drill and for lack of interest in his work.

Matzneff understood his smile.

"Ah, Sasha. Can it be that you also are only a lump of 'cannonfodder' without nerves and brains? Can it be that you



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will never be able to raise yourself in spirit and leave the world of reality for the world of dreams and reverie! Well carry on! Love anything that falls into your hands, hurry so as not to lose moments of so called happiness, moments when the heart leaps sensuously and when the world seems beautiful. When a Finnish maid appears to be a goddess of beauty and a ballet dancer an unattainable ideal. Catch these moments! You will never understand the deep meaning of life. Only do not seek purity in love, but only beauty."

"When your indignation burst out at the behaviour of Gritzenko everyone saw the nobleness of your soul. Good chap, Sasha! He deserved it. It is time to forget these relics of the days of serfdom. It is time to become men. But remember, Sasha, that you cannot become a man in the military service."

"But why," said Sablin. On the contrary. . . . It is just there in the military service, which means chivalry—which means the greatest possible renouncement of ones self; the realisation in life of the greatest of Christ's orders!"

"Sasha, you are a child! And what is more, uneducated child! You believe in this—'A Dieu mon ame, ma vie au roi, mon coeur aux dames, l'honneur pour moi.' You must be happy! You believe in this because you are a child. Well, be one! Only remember: take all that you can from life. Take and do not waver. Have you read Schopenhauer's 'The World as Will and Idea'? No, it was silly of me to suppose you had. You have read nothing. There must be nothing higher for you than the philosophy of de Maupassant, and even Zola must seem heavy. . . . Well, Sasha, carry on! You had no luck? You are disappointed? Never mind, we will find you another!"

"Leave me alone," said Sablin growing pale with anger,—  
"you cannot help saying something unclean."

"Beautifully said."

"Ivan Sergeievitch, I've had enough of this," said Sablin; and shrugging his shoulders he walked out of the library.

One desire was dominating in him—to sleep, and to destroy by sleep all the impressions of the last twenty-four hours.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

### VI

THERE was no drill in the 2nd squadron. All the windows of the vast barrack with long rows of beds neatly covered by grey blankets were wide open.

Soldiers were idly standing by the windows and looking out on the wide courtyard. One part of it was separated by a high fence so as to form a narrow alley across which obstacles were arranged: a wall of earth, a ditch, a small fence, and a log wound round with straw.

Soldiers were teaching young horses to jump over them, letting them one by one into the alley and urging them on with long whips from behind.

At the other side of the yard recruits were taught swordsmanship. Reeds were planted in wooden holders and the soldiers had to gallop past cutting them down.

Near the guard house, before a hut painted in stripes, a sentry walked up and down. A brilliantly polished trumpet lay on a stand near him. Sunshine filled the yard and gave a happy and cheery look to the soldiers as they rode and drilled and to the officers standing in a separate group in the middle.

The men of the second squadron lolled on the window sills making remarks on the scene before them.

The singers, who had just finished their tea, stood in separate groups, some by the windows, others sitting and lazily lying on the beds.

"Look, look at the corporal in the fourth! He catches the hips of the men with his whip each time they make a mistake," remarked Artemieff, a young fair-haired fellow, pointing at the squad at swordsmanship drill.

"And good too," said a dark smart soldier in his last year of service,—*"they will try to do better."*

"Great God," said Artemieff, "I always try, even say a prayer sometimes, but either my hand slips or the horse jerks aside and there you are! And you mustn't even dare to complain. He will say he missed the horse. Missed! He does his best

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to catch you on the foot or on the neck where it will hurt you most."

"I had a scar for two weeks from his whip," said another.

"Well, that's nothing," condescendingly said Nedodai. "It's a lesson. You know the proverb: 'a beaten man is worth two who have not felt the lash.' In olden days they used to beat more. It isn't good to fuss about with us. But if you get hit and mocked at the same time, and by an officer too, that does hurt!"

"And did that happen to you?" asked Artemieff.

"Well, yes. . . . It was his own fault and he hit me. I was quite young then,—just beginning to master the regulations and was on duty in the stables. Matzneff entered, a cigarette between his teeth. A new consignment of hay and straw had been delivered and was lying about. The horses were munching their oats. I remembered the regulation, came up to him, saluted and reported: Your Honour, it is forbidden to smoke in the stables."

"You idiot," exclaimed an elderly soldier. "What impertinence!"

"You wait for what happened after. 'Bend down, scoundrel,' shouted Matzneff, quite white and shaking. 'Bend down!' I did as he ordered and he hit me again and again on the face. 'A soldier,' he said, 'must not dare to make a remark to an officer, and you, you d . . . d beast, forget my proper title.' And why? He was only a Lieutenant then."

"Why? He was doing as he wished and that is enough," said Makarenko,—“your business was to keep silent.”

"He hit you on the face, you say," remarked Corporal Antonoff,—“never mind, your face is fat enough.”

"What a rotter Matzneff is. No wonder no one likes him. A weakling, good for nothing. At the sword drill he either lets his sword fall or hits his horse on the ear while he jumps. I never saw him jump an obstacle properly!"

"That is only a trifle," grimly said Balinsky, "but he takes boys from the soldiers' sons squad to the baths with him. That is bad!"

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An awkward silence followed.

"Yes," meditatively said Nedodai at last, "everything is possible for the gentle people."

"And why?" asked Artemieff.

"Why? because they are gentle people," answered Nedodai in a tone which allowed no contradiction.

"You saw what happened today at Gritzenko's. Wine, drunkenness, he himself as drunk as a lord. Let anyone of us try to bring in just a little vodka—he won't get off lightly! And the girls there! Before them, the Mess orderly told me, he smacked his own orderly on the face. Is that good?" quietly asked a grim unhealthy looking soldier, Volkonsky.

"Well," remarked Nedodai, "Gritzenko is a good cheery gentleman. He hit Avdeenko—that isn't such a great misfortune after all. They live together. Think of the amount of sugar and cigarettes Avdeenko steals from him. And Gritzenko never says a word. That is so—gentleman and servant. Special relations. But Gritzenko is a kind man at heart. With him it would be cheery even in battle."

"And Sasha defended the orderly," said corporal Artemieff. "He is the best of them all. A good gentleman. Sings with the soldiers, never says a word that will offend. I did not salute him once, simply did not notice. He stopped me and seemed at a loss what to say. 'You must be more attentive,' he remarked. Well I thought he would tell the squadron C. O. and I should be in for it. As a precaution I reported to the sergeant. He stuck me out before the guard house with rifle and in full equipment. Sablin saw me, asked for what I was being punished, let me go and even said: 'He deserves praise, another would have been silent about it and he reported himself.'"

"It's because he is young now. Afterwards he will be the same as the rest," said Nedodai.

"Who knows?" meditatively said Bondareff,—“it is true that the service makes people gruffer.

"It's not the hitting which upsets one," remarked Lenitzin who had a deep voice and sang in the choir,—“but that one does not see any truth anywhere.”

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"Where will you find it!" said Nedodai.

"Take for example last evening. All saw how much Gritzenko gave to the choir."

"Twenty-five rubles," said Artemieff, sighing.

"We were twenty-five men there. That makes a ruble per head. And we received?"

"Eighty copecks," said Balinsky.

"But where have the five rubles gone to?" asked Nedodai.

"Where? The sergeant has kept them. I should understand if the choir leader got more, he teaches the rest, his is the first job, but the sergeant—what has he to do with it?"

Lubovin was standing apart, his back against the wall, listening. From time to time his face twitched nervously. At last he could not restrain himself.

"And why don't you try to get at the truth?" he asked harshly.

"How can you?" asked Nedodai, looking sidewise in an unfriendly way at Lubovin.

"You have been hit by Matzneff when you were in the right. Why didn't you complain?"

"And to whom?"

"To whom," exclaimed Lubovin imitating him, "to the squadron C. O. of course!" His voice broke down.

"To Gritzenko! He won't joke with you! He would give you a double dose and stick you into a dark cell for a change."

"Well, complain higher, protest, seek for the truth."

"Where will you find it? Everywhere around are gentle people, they all help each other."

"Gentle-people! . . . And what does 'gentle-people' mean? Did you ever think why they are gentle people?"

"Rich, learned . . . and because of that they're gentle people."

"And what are you? Flat footed peasants? Serfs? There must be no gentle-people and masters nowadays. They are just like ourselves and some—take Matzneff for instance,—even worse than we. Why should they receive honours and respect? Because they have a lot of land? But the land is yours

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in reality. They do not work on it themselves. They drink, lead a merry life and you bear the burden on your shoulders. The land belongs to God only, the same as the air, the water . . . And not to them."

"You must stop this," said Bondireff severely.

"Stop what? Why?" heatedly exclaimed Lubovin.

"What you are saying. I think you understand it yourself."

Lubovin looked round for support. But the singers who had been standing round were dispersing. Each found an excuse for doing so. One was seized by a terrible desire to have a smoke, the spur of another became loose, a third suddenly remembered that his bed was not tidied. They all went away, Bondireff alone remaining. He looked severely at Lubovin.

"You had better quit this, Lubovin," he said in a tone which had suddenly become very kind.

"But excuse me, Pavel Abramovitch, you are a peasant yourself. You must agree with me that there is no truth in these days."

"I am a peasant, and what is more, a landless one. I served as a hired workman, but nevertheless I wouldn't say anything like this and I advise you to let these arguments alone."

"And the truth?"

"You will not find the truth anywhere Lubovin. It has been settled so by God."

"By God?"

"Yes by God. Truth exists only in the Kingdom of God, but on the earth there is no truth."

"You believe in what you say?"

"I believe."

Bondireff turned round and walked away through the barracks. Lubovin stood for a moment in indecision then shrugged his shoulders and muttered bitterly:

"Ough! Stupid men! Slaves!"

He felt it hard to breathe in the cool barrack. The cracking of whips and the shouted orders outside irritated him. He cleaned his tunic, put on his new overcoat, cap and sword and went to ask for leave from the sergeant.



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### VII

THE sergeant had just finished drinking tea with soft fresh bread. He had given his wife the five rubles he had received the previous evening, then bathed his face in cold running water from the tap, smoothed his short red hair which was already thin in places, twirled his moustache, and having put on a clean shirt with a tight elk-skin belt, prepared himself to go and round up his men for the cleaning of the stables.

On the doorstep he ran into Lubovin.

"What are you doing on a working day in your Sunday uniform?" he asked.

"I wanted to ask leave to go and visit my father. Till eleven only."

"Nonsense!" said the sergeant, but by the tone of his voice Lubovin understood that he had succeeded.

"I swear, Ivan Karpovitch, my father urgently needs me."

"Good. Have you finished your work in the office?"

"Yes."

"Well, go and report to the orderly corporal."

"Thank you, sir."

Lubovin spun on his heels and went, but the sergeant stopped him by an angry "wait a minute." Lubovin turned to him and was surprised at the stern expression of his face.

"You can have your leave," he said in a whisper, "but remember Lubovin, that I see you through and through!" And the sergeant brought up his huge red hairy fists into Lubovin's very face.—"Just you try to disturb the minds of my men or carry on any propaganda—you won't get out of here alive. You have protection, I know. General Martoff asked for you, but I won't mind that. I remember only the duty of my service and of my oath. Yes . . . Things have happened here . . . Thefts, drunkenness . . . Once a man was murdered in the loft. I can pardon, overlook and cover up anything. But never, do you hear Lubovin, never has there been any socialism in these walls."

"And remember : if any silly idea appears in the head of any-



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one—I will hold you responsible. You will answer with your head and no protection will save you: I will strangle you myself . . .” gurgled the sergeant.

“Now, go. I am not in earnest. I cannot even imagine that anyone could be found in our regiment who held unorthodox views about the Faith, the Emperor and the Motherland! Go!”

Lubovin turned abruptly and went.

“Did the sergeant suspect anything, or did he simply want to frighten me as a precaution because I am the son of a workman and have nearly finished high school?” he thought as he walked along the streets. “And if he knows, what does he know, exactly? My friendship with Korjikoff, my membership in the newly formed Labour Party, the fact that I have certain compromising books at home, or what I sometimes say to the soldiers?”

“It is not possible that he should know the first. I never brought those books to the barracks, and as to what I said sometimes . . . Who could denounce me? Who? But they are after all only—soldiers. For a kind word, for a lighter burden of fatigue, so as not to groom an extra horse or clean out an extra stable, they would be ready to whisper to the sergeant and repeat my words, utterly, changing them. Korjikoff says that the chief difficulty is the Army, that the workmen are prepared and ready, but are only afraid of the soldiers.

“But how can you succeed in converting them while there exist fat mercenary hides like Ivan Karpovitch’s, capable of anything and possessing huge scarlet fists!”

Lubovin went the whole length of the Nevsky Prospect, crossed the Znamenskaya square and a wooden bridge over the evil smelling Ligovka and took a tramway running to the Nevsky Barrier. He was the son of a factory foreman turner in one of the machine works and happened to be in the regiment quite accidentally, owing to special protection.

His father, a man respected by everyone, had begun as a plate layer, had then studied the metal-lathe trade and, owing to sober and moderate habits and careful work, had managed to save sufficient money to buy a small house in which he lived

with his daughter and son. He early became a widower. Both his children had been sent to public schools and he dreamed of starting them along the intellectual road and of getting them into society.

But the son took an early interest in the labour question, slackened in his studies and was expelled from the school. Old Lubovin wanted to settle him in the factory but Victor proved himself incompetent and only spoiled materials. Three years passed in unsuccessful attempts to teach him some business, and the time came for him to be called up for military service. The father did not wish to be separated from his son, fearing that military life would spoil him and that he would definitely break off from work.

His daughter was just finishing her studies. Her best school friend was the daughter of General Martoff and through her Lubovin was enrolled in a Guards Regiment as squadron clerk. Both the son Victor and the daughter Marousia were gifted. Victor had a considerable amount of natural musical feeling and a beautiful soft tenor voice. Marousia was also musically inclined and dreamt of the conservatory and of the stage.

But old Lubovin looked down upon an artistic career and wished his daughter to attend the university and become a learned woman.

The father grew harder and harder, kept closer than ever at his work, spent all day at the factory and took extra work to do at home, but still was not happy. He had expected something different from his children, for whom he had done all that lay in his power.

After passing the glass works, Lubovin got out of the tram and walked for two hundred paces along a wooden side-walk up to his father's house.

It was a small one-storied, wooden building painted in brown with three large windows opening on the street, and a small stoop. There was a brass plate on the door. Lubovin rang the bell and heard quick light footsteps approaching from the other side. He recognised them immediately and his heart began to beat happily. He had a deep, tender and respectful love for his

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sister. She was the only ideal he had and in his mind no one could be her superior intellectually or physically.

"Victor! How nice and unexpected!" exclaimed Marousia kissing her brother fondly.

Marousia was in her eighteenth year—three years younger than her brother. Hers was a real beauty. Her dark auburn hair was done in two long plaits which hung down on her back like two shining snakes. Her rosy face was a pretty oval with a slender nose and small well shaped lips. It was lit by a pair of beautiful eyes of a delicate blue. These clear eyes shaded by long eyelashes gazed from under slender arched brows without a single sinful thought dimming their clearness. A beautiful soul was seen through them. Every moment they changed their expression, even the colour of their blue. Each word, each movement of the soul, each thought which flashed like lightning in the brain behind her white, clear forehead, with two or three unruly locks of hair straying over it—was immediately reflected in her eyes. One moment they sparkled with the happiness and enthusiasm of success, the blue border round the shining pupil changing to different shades of sapphire—then they would suddenly stop, become sadder and paler as if they faded before one's eyes and the black pupil seemed to be surrounded by pale turquoise.

She was beautifully formed. Small hands and feet and slender waist. Her young breasts rose and fell nervously and impetuously, in response to her words and her feelings. Victor had an unhealthy appearance, surly and callous. But in her veins ran youth, health, muscular strength and a sense of the blood boiling.

"Andrei Alexeievitch read my composition before the whole class," said Marousia blushing with joy. I even felt uncomfortable! . . . But in his reading it seemed really good. Sometimes I wondered whether it was really myself who had written it. He read it so well. But what is the matter with you? You seem to be distressed by something. Well, come to my room. Is it because you cannot yet accustom yourself to routine?" They passed to Marousia's room through the dining room and

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their father's study, where there stood a turning lathe and drills, and where many other instruments hung on the walls in special leather cases.

Her room was simply furnished. A plain writing table covered with a lot of exercise and reading books and a large crystal inkpot stood before the window, the lower part of which was shut off by a blue curtain. A book shelf hung on one wall, along which stood an iron bed with a white lace coverlet. By the other wall was a small chest of drawers on which stood some pussy-willows sprouting in a glass, an old album with flowers painted on its wooden lid, a small china hare and a big heap of music. Three straw chairs and a dark curtain to hide the clothes hanging in a corner completed the furnishings.

Over the bed, in a black frame hung an enlargement of a photograph of an elderly woman in simple clothes with a handkerchief on her head—the mother of Marousia.

Over the chest of drawers was pinned the photograph of a group of school friends and large lithograph portraits of Dostoevsky, Count Tolstoi and Shevtchenko.

"Sit down," said Marousia. "Fedor Fedorovitch will soon be here and we shall have some tea. There is plenty of time before dinner. . . . So you cannot accustom yourself to the work?"

"How can you get accustomed to it?" exclaimed Lubovin with despair. "Is this service, work? Is this a life, this mocking of one's personality. Today—we are waked up at four o'clock. What has happened? A fire? An alarm? No! Simply His Honour wishes to hear the singers! You have to get up, tidy yourself in a hurry and go to sing. And there everything is upside down. Wine, drunken half dressed officers, women from the street . . . Shame! This is called service to the Sovereign and Motherland."

"What can you do, Victor," Marousia said quietly,—“have patience. It is so all round. Life is one thing in thought and another in action.”

"Yesterday Gritzenko hit his orderly because he gave him red wine instead of champagne. And Sasha, you remember I told

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you about him,—the one who teaches me to sing,—suddenly interfered. The orderlies told me, they nearly had a quarrel. And with them a duel would follow immediately, a fight, murder! Beastly custom, Marousia!”

Canaries sang loudly from a cage hanging in the next room, the roar of the streets rushed in through an open window, the bells of the tramways, clashing of iron and rumble of heavy carts intermingling. Through that noise was heard the faint tinkling of a bell.

“This must be Fedor Fedorovitch,” said Marousia—“I saw him at the gates of the factory talking with some workmen.”

“Spends his time distributing pamphlets to them,” irritably answered Victor, “and they use them for cigarettes.”

“Tell him all about it,” said Marousia and ran to open the door.

### VIII

FEDOR FEDOROVITCH KORJIKOFF was an eternal student. He had not visited the university for so long that he had himself forgotten whether he was a student or not. He was writing a dissertation, but could not finish it. Other things attracted him. He was attracted by the propaganda among the workmen and activity in the social revolutionary party where he was known as a prominent and active worker. His age was about thirty. He made an unpleasant impression at first because of his appearance. He was short, stooping, all covered by red hair with a freckled face. He constantly twitched his small red beard between his fingers, putting its end into his mouth from time to time. A dark red costume in which he was attired was very untidy.

But he had a quick wit, sharp judgement, and could speak very well. His voice, just a trifle hoarse, as if tired, knew how to penetrate into one's soul and to instil any idea he wished. Patient and persevering he carried on his revolutionary work for the future without haste, for he held the opinion that if the revolution happened in a century's time—even that would be good.



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"Aha, warrior," he said greeting Lubovin, "to what do we owe the pleasure of seeing you on a work-day? Some Imperial Clemency?"

"Yes, an act of clemency! The gentry revelled all night and we, the servants, are free for the day. And no drill. A holiday for a hundred men because one has drunk a glass more than he ought to!"

Lubovin told him all about what he had seen and heard the previous night at Gritzenko's flat.

"So, excellent," Korjikoff kept repeating as he listened.

"What is there excellent in it, Fedor Fedorovitch," exclaimed Lubovin angrily.

"They are helping us themselves, Victor Mihailovitch. The soldiers felt indignant, I should think. Add a drop more in one place, a stroke in another, underline the right point somewhere else and we won't be very far from a mutiny."

"Oh, Fedor Fedorovitch. You don't know our brother, the soldier. He is so dark, so submissive, so—devil knows what—hit him in the face and he will stretch out his other cheek. Quite a sort of walking scripture! . . ."

"Well, that's not quite the way it happens, really," said Fedor Fedorovitch,—“your Sasha for example was indignant.”

"Ah, what does Sasha matter," Lubovin waved his hand.

"He is just the man we want. After all it is all your own fault, Victor Mihailovitch. You are too fiery—you boil, make a noise, bluff . . . that is not good in our work. You must do as the Germans say—*langsam, ruhig*—then things will go all right. Did you speak with the soldiers afterwards? Did you take advantage of the psychological moment?"

"I did, and I spoke. Eh, Fedor Fedorovitch, you can persuade this table sooner than you can them. You hear only the unchanging cry—gentlemen! gentlemen! For that they are gentlemen! There is no truth in this world. The truth is only in God's kingdom. When I began to explain they all dispersed. They are afraid."

"Victor Mihailovitch," said Korjikoff, "you will only frighten the men away and will not bear your turbulent head on your



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shoulders for long. The time has not yet come to shout in the squares and to preach aloud. The truth, Victor Mihailovitch, is concealing itself in cellars at the present moment and does not say what its name is. Why should we? They will betray—you are right in saying that they will betray. They are afraid of each other and will betray so that the others may not betray them. Men have become scoundrels, oh what scoundrels! But you cannot judge them severely. You have told me yourself what fists the sergeant possesses. And their souls are withered like old rags,—how can they resist? They fall in the end. You must deal with them, Victor Mihailovitch, one by one, and with kindness too. There is an excellent word:—comrade. Yes. . . approach the soldier with this word. And when there is no one else near. He does not know this word. He will wonder at it. It is like a sweet fragrance. It simply enters the soul. Prepare one in the spirit of rebellion—and you have already done some good work. Let one man become displeased with everything, criticise everything, let him find that everything is wrong all around, then start on another. We would need an officer. It is very difficult without one. You must convert an officer.”

“That’s impossible, Fedor Fedorovitch. How can you approach them when they are not even men, I say. They are full of their own ideas.”

“Don’t be too sure. Cases are known among them. Take: Postel, Rileieff. Leo Nikolaievitch Tolstoi himself was an officer once and see how he works now for the corruption of the Army.”

“That may happen in some other regiments, but in ours it is impossible. Our officers have more consideration for a horse than for a man. In the 3rd squadron a soldier killed himself while jumping over a barrier last week, and you know what the squadron C. O. said? ‘That the d . . . d scoundrel killed himself—well, he deserved it. But he spoilt the best horse in the squadron and I won’t forgive him in the next life for that!’ See for yourself what they are like!”

“But not all, surely?” said Fedor Fedorovitch.

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"All," viciously snapped Lubovin.

"And Sasha?" quietly asked Marousia.

"And Sasha will become like the rest."

"Don't let him. Wake human feelings in him," said Marousia and took her brother's hand. Her touch seemed to soften Victor.

"I really don't know what to do," he said.

Fedor Fedorovitch began to speak about strikes as a measure of strife successfully employed abroad.

"Our comrades are insufficiently organised for that yet. But I think we shall succeed in the end. There are some sharp minds who understand that already. Only your father hinders us greatly"—Fedor Fedorovitch was saying, "and he is a foreman. A foreman in a factory is like an officer in a regiment."

"Why don't you convert him then," laughed Victor.

"Well, he is an old man. It is difficult to change his opinions. We want someone like your Sasha. The more you tell me about him, the more I begin to think that he represents material with which we could do something."

Fedor Fedorovitch rose and began to take leave. Marousia and Victor rose also.

"Again to your workmen?" said Marousia.

"Yes, I have a fellow here. Comrade Pavel. Clever brains. His appearance is unsightly but wrath simply boils in him," said Fedor Fedorovitch and looked at Marousia.

She stood with her back against a grey iron stove. Her arms were lowered and her fingers were spread out grasping the stove. Her head was tipped backwards, the nostrils were nervously throbbing, the mouth slightly opened and through it white teeth were shining like pearls. Her eyes were sparkling under lowered black eyelashes. Like Charlotte Corday before the murder of Marat, thought Fedor Fedorovitch. How unlike her brother she is. She would be capable of anything, of being burnt alive for an idea, for a word, for the work.

"And what," he said quietly and insinuatively, "if we should try Maria Mihailovna."

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Lubovin started and looked at Fedor Fedorovitch with surprise.

"Do you understand what you are saying," he said.

"Very well, Victor Mihailovitch. If a sacrifice is necessary we will have to make it. No one could resist Maria Mihailovna. And your Sasha will become an obedient slave of all her wishes."

An ominous silence followed. Marousia bent her head farther back to the stove and stood breathing nervously without looking at her brother or Fedor Fedorovitch. Lubovin turned to him with indignation. As if he did not know how limitless was the love of this uncouth Korjikoff for his sister.

"You are mad," he said angrily.

"So, so," calmly said Fedor Fedorovitch, "Maria Mihailovna, would you make this sacrifice if it should be necessary?"

Marousia only sighed heavily. Slowly she lowered her head and fixed her blue eyes on Korjikoff. He seemed to shrink, grasped his small beard in his fist and walked towards the door shrugging his shoulders.

"If the party considers it necessary,"—he said in a hoarse voice, "then, Maria Mihailovna, we will ask you."

And he disappeared behind the door

## IX

DENSE dark clouds were rolling over the earth shutting off the whole of the horizon. Distant lightning played among them with mysterious lights. Something terrible was taking place in Nature and the earth bent low before the threatening and infuriated heavens. Not a single leaf fluttered on the tall birch trees. Wide marshy meadows seemed to swell with water. Behind them, mute and threatening, rose a forest. The distant gulf behind it resembled a streak of silver under the black clouds. A mysterious and dark night was approaching, promising storm and bad weather.

It was unbearably close in a small cottage on the outskirts of Krasnoie Selo in which Sablin and Rotbek occupied a room for the time of the manœuvres. Instead of air dense darkness

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full of marshy vapours entered through both opened windows. Rotbek had gone to bed at ten o'clock and was now loudly snoring. Sablin was sitting at the open window in the dark room. He felt lonely and uncomfortable in that small room. He went out and walked along the birch lane towards the fields.

It was so dark that it was with difficulty that he found a small bench under a birch tree and sat down.

The Camp had been living an exceptional life the last three days. Day and night, on the manœuvre grounds, at Duderhof, through the villages surrounding Krasnoie Selo, near the station and among the lines of the Camps, big men clad in blue tunics were riding about on grey horses. They were accompanied by picked N. C. O.'s of the Guard's Regiments. The officials of the villages were constantly in the chains—emblems of their office—and kept patrolling the houses. In Krasnoie Selo itself appeared men dressed in plain clothes but broad shouldered, powerful, and with a fine bearing. They rode about on bicycles, walked along the lanes and sat on benches. All were waiting—listening—watching for something. Plain Krasnoie Selo, with its dusty manœuvre field covered in some places by trampled grass suddenly became mysterious and uncomfortable.

All this was happening because the Emperor had arrived with his young beautiful wife and was staying at the palace in the centre of Krasnoie Selo.

Sablin deeply believed from his childhood that the Emperor was a Sovereign anointed by God and, comparing the state of Nature, the approaching storm and flashing lightnings with the earthly events, he felt afraid.

He sat on the bench leaning against the trunk of the birch tree. A man, dressed in a short overcoat and peasant's cap, suddenly seemed to detach himself from the surrounding darkness and approached the place where the white tunic of Sablin was dimly visible. He seemed to peer at him then stopped before the nearest telegraph pole with his back against it.

"Who is there?" shouted Sablin.

"A passer-by," dully answered the stranger. Saying this he drew backwards and completely effaced himself behind the pole.

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The telegraph wires hummed, the stranger was silent and Sablin began to feel as if no one was present. Only a pale stain, where the face of the passer-by was, became slightly visible when the lightning flashed. What does he want? Who is he? thought Sablin.

Suddenly in an excited broken voice the stranger spoke.

"Well, comrade, he said, are you also oppressed by the weather?" The word "comrade" he pronounced somewhat uncertainly.

Sablin did not answer. The familiarity of this unknown man roused his indignation. Probably, he thought, he is some agent of the secret police, grown weary of his nightly watch, who wishes to distract himself by conversation. Sablin understood the necessity of the "Ohrana" \* but had a feeling of aversion and mistrust for its agents.

"Queer weather, this! The witches have their sabbath on such nights, I should think. And what will it only be tomorrow! Tomorrow, comrade, is the parade. It's not good. Is it?"

"Yes," said Sablin, "it is bad for the parade."

"Yes, very bad even!" exclaimed the stranger as if glad to hear what Sablin had said. Sablin thought he had heard somewhere that hoarse tenor voice.

"Only think, comrade. The Emperor will appear tomorrow to the people. Yes. . . . The Sovereign anointed by God. . . . The earthly God. . . . Among the peasants—and one can say that all our soldiers are peasants—what belief there is on this subject. The Emperor—appears in all his glory, the sun shines, the angels blow their trumpets from the heavens, gold, purple and the magnificence of the parade all around, and suddenly there will be a downpour of rain tomorrow which will drench our Lord and instead of a God in a halo of golden rays, everyone will see simply an ordinary wet man shivering under streams of water and just as much a mortal as we all are."

"Ah, comrade, what will happen then! Won't the people

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\* Russian secret police.



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say—what is the use of an Emperor if he is just like the rest of us? And what has the anointment by God to do with it?”

“But who are you?” exclaimed Sablin impatiently.

“I? Why do you want to know? I do not know you, you do not know me. The night is unutterably terrible, not a thing can be seen,—why shouldn’t we talk freely? You will lighten your soul and I will throw off my burden. We will both feel easier after. Yes . . . I am a passer-by . . . not from this locality. I saw you come . . . well . . . and decided to have a chat with you.”

“But how do you dare to speak so about the Emperor!”

“How do you mean? Excuse me, I don’t quite understand you.”

“So disrespectfully . . . and boldly.”

“Ah, so. . . . You see, I do not suffer from this hypnosis. I do not believe that the Tsar is anointed by God and I do not believe in God. How can you believe in Him when you understand what an atom is or a bacillus, and how man was derived from a monkey? I should think it would be strange then to believe in God, the Creation of the world, and other fables. Perhaps this is not interesting to you?”

“It is not. With such men as you I neither wish to dispute or talk at all. Be off.”

“But why should I go? No one will tell you the truth, your Honour. Listen to me, perhaps you may hear something useful. You must bear in mind, comrade, that all this is only hypnotism and deception of simple folk so as to hold them in slavery. Take the liberation movement. You have certainly heard how the Emperor Alexander II was murdered. How was it done? From behind a corner in a half deserted street. . . . The carriage was smashed, but a sledge was at hand. They put the Emperor in the sledge and drove him off to the palace, but blood remained on the snow. Sentries were posted. The blood is sacred, they said. Flowers were brought, ikons, gold, silver,—well, as a result nothing came of it all. The Tsar-Martyr! I was a boy then and visited the place. I also experienced a feeling somewhat akin to awe. Yes . . . and the peo-



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

ple, although grown up are not better than children. Ah, that is not the way to do it. One must show that all this is a fraud.

"Suppose for example that tomorrow at the parade when all the troops are presenting arms and not daring even to breathe, a soldier should start from the ranks. . . . A bold man. There have been many such fearless souls, who resolutely went to a certain death. Suppose he raises his rifle and fires at the Emperor. Let him be torn to pieces after that. The deed will be done. And then—amen—instead of the Sovereign anointed by God there will be a corpse in the dirt and dust, and before all the people, you understand, before all the people. You will not persuade others afterwards that it is impossible. It will be the end."

"Who are you and why are you speaking like this,"—asked Sablin, controlling his excitement. "Is it because you are afraid and tremble as we all do for the sacred person of the Emperor, or because you are one of these terrible men. You must then understand what risks you are running!"

"Ah, comrade. . . . Do as you like—arrest me. I am pouring out my soul to you because this night oppresses me, it draws me to frankness. . . . Do as you like. . . . Only I think that your earthly kingdom is built upon sand. A wind will blow, will sweep away the sands and everything will fall to pieces. Take tomorrow as an example again. . . . Yes. . . . All your perfectly aligned quadrangles of troops, your battalion and regimental columns will become disarranged, will move from their places, will murder their officers, will disperse over the whole field, and instead of a magnificent parade you will have a terrible armed crowd which no one will dare to approach. It is only a pretence that it cannot be done. Yes,—one alone cannot do it, but how about all? All acting together,—the strength lies in that,—when all shall wish it, nothing will frighten them. No one will believe that the Tsar is selected by God, that he is anointed by God. Is much necessary for that? If it will only rain tomorrow or some bold man appear. You will not be able to stop him. Do you know what is in the minds of your soldiers? They listen to what you say, they listen, but

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both in number and individually in physical strength they are much stronger than you are. It is so, comrade. . . .”

Sablin rose.

“Who are you?” he gasped. “How dare you. . . . I will. . . .”

A dark form detached itself from the telegraph pole and bending over darted down the road.

“Stop!” shouted Sablin.

But at that moment a strong whirlwind rushed along the earth, the great birch tree shuddered with all its leaves, lightning split the sky and immediately a tremendous peal of thunder burst overhead. It seemed to Sablin that he recognised the stranger in the glare of the lightning.

“Lubovin!” he shouted.

But chaos reigned around. The heavens were ringing with peals of thunder and a torrent of cold rain suddenly poured from the sky. Sablin was drenched through to the last thread of his shirt, the wind seemed to catch at his feet and check his movements, the water rushed down the slope of the road, its hubbles foaming and shining in the gleam of the lightnings. Flash followed flash. Sometimes two at a time, three, in quick succession they split the black sky and then for a second appeared the whole street of Krasnoie Selo, the birch trees on both sides of the road, the ditches boiling with water, the barrack behind them and a sentry in an overcoat which seemed black with water under a multi-coloured mushroom. Terrible peals of thunder followed immediately, the sky seemed to rush down on the earth and darkness concealed everything. Only the water flashed with the large bubbles rising on its surface, and great streams of rain rushing in a furious whirlwind whipped the face, the breast, and the feet. It was impossible to pursue.

Sablin ran up to his cottage, stopped, thought for a moment, shook himself and went to his room, leaving big pools of water behind him. He lit a candle and without waking his orderly pulled off his drenched clothing and wrapped himself up in his blanket. Rotbek was quietly sleeping at the other end of the

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

room. Sablin looked at his watch. It was three o'clock. The storm was passing away in the direction of Gatchino, the lightning flashed less frequently, the thunder pealed farther and farther away, the wind abated and only an even methodical rain pattered on the roof, the leaves of the birch trees and the paths of the garden.

"How will the parade be tomorrow?" thought Sablin and the same second felt as if he were separated from the earth and rushed onwards in an unknown direction. Sleep embraced his youthful body refreshed by the rain. Scarcely having the time to blow out the candle he sank into sweet nothingness. The patter of the rain soothed his slumbers.

### X

WHEN SABLIN woke it was already morning and rather late. Rotbek, already dressed in top boots with spurs, breeches and a tunic with shining belt and sword strap over his shoulder was drinking tea at the table near the window. His orderly was buttering slices of bread for him. Sablin's wet clothing had been cleared away as well as the pools of water on the floor and his orderly had prepared everything fresh for him to put on.

Sablin jumped out of bed and ran to the window. What kind of weather was it?

The rain had stopped but gray clouds moved low over the earth and in some places fog covered the fields and meadows. Soldiers were leading their horses out of the courtyard across the road and mounting them. A smart N. C. O., Stepanenko, neatly dressed, as if polished all over, was inspecting them and giving final instructions.

"Have you all taken bunches of straw, boys? Don't forget them or you will have nothing to wipe the feet of the horses down with. Vatroutshtchenko, run round to the section corporal with the pail. Put it in the wagon. We may have to wash the hoofs."

"The parade! The parade is not cancelled!" happily thought Sablin.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Rotbek munch-

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ing his bread and butter. "Where on earth were you yesterday? You simply drenched the floor through with your tracks."

"Dear Pik, the parade . . . parade . . . today. Sherstobitoff! Quick! I've got to wash,—dress . . .!"

Sablin was ready in two minutes. He felt as if he could embrace the whole world from that sensation of youth, health, of the beauty of his regiment which was already lining up in the street. How good it was to realise that he was also an insignificant item in that dashing famous regiment.

How nice it would be to come up to his "Mirabeau," a well fed and well cared for charger whose coat shone like silk, and see him squint his beautiful black eye after a piece of sugar. It would be still nicer to ride up composedly to his squadron lined up in frozen immobility in the street, hear Rotbek order "attention," greet the men and hear them answer cheerily—"Good health to your Honour." And then to ride slowly and proudly down the ranks looking straight into the faces of the soldiers. The fairy tale of the previous night came to his mind. He remembered all that he had heard about a bold soldier, about a mutiny and bad weather. He felt uneasy now looking at the men. Could it be possible that Lubovin . . .?

Here he is—in the rear ranks of the second section. His pale face is sombre, the eyes shine with hatred. But his head is turned towards Sablin and he slowly follows him with his eyes.

No, he will be all right. A trifle pale, but he is always like this—an unhealthy man. If only the weather does not play a bad trick!

Here is the sergeant, Ivan Karpovitch. His whole breast is aglow with medals and a silver chain of rifles hangs down from one of the buttons. What a handsome man he is. The best horseman in the regiment. Although he is long past thirty and old enough to be Sablin's father, how respectfully he looks at him and glances with his eyes at something on one side. Ah, it is Lieutenant Fetisoff who is riding up to the ranks.

With the same holiday enthusiasm Sablin moved towards

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

the flank of the squadron and shouted the command: "Attention! Eyes right Gentlemen Officers!"

The manœuvre field was teeming with unusual life. Long files of infantry wagons and peasants' carts filled with sand moved towards the Tsar's Mound so as to mend the havoc wrought by the storm.

Ladies and young girls in rose-coloured, blue, lilac or white dresses, in hats with ostrich feathers, flowers and ribbons, rode and drove in private carriages, or *izvostchiks*, or came on foot.

All belonging to the intimate military circle, regimental and battery ladies or their friends, the mothers, sisters and wives of officers were allowed to appear with special passes in the imperial enclosure.

Police in light blue with silver tunics mounted on grey horses were verifying the passes. The music of bands at the heads of dark columns of infantry rang over the field. The men walked heavily and slowly through the wet clay which stuck to their brightly polished boots and covered them higher and higher.

The units occupied their respective places which were marked by men posted since five o'clock in the morning with brightly coloured ensigns attached to their bayonets and ropes stretched from peg to peg. The soldiers were then allowed to break the grim order of their ranks and to begin to clear the clay off their boots, smartening their appearance as if they had only just come out of their tents.

The whole field was busily working. The infantry cleaned their boots; the cavalry, dismounting, washed the hoofs of the horses, brushed their tails hair by hair; and all cast anxious glances at the sky and the hills of Duderhof.

It was a sure sign of coming good weather if the dark cap of woods on Duderhof rose out of the mists. But Duderhof was screened by the fog and even below, along the Tartar restaurant, patches of mist could be seen. Nothing promised sunlight, but it ought to come, it ought to pour its rays on the crowned Tsar anointed by God.

Grey haired Generals with bright ribbons and decorations, commanding divisions, brigades and regiments, believed that it



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must be so while they looked on frowning as their men tidied themselves. Young officers, old sergeants, soldiers of different ages believed, and even Lubovin believed. At least Sablin noticed that he looked anxiously at the grey cheerless sky and the smoking fogs of Duderhof.

In fairy-tale beauty and grandeur the Tsar must appear before his troops, covered by the rays of the sun, beautiful, magnificent and distant. Not of this world. Old folk said that it was always so—whatever the weather was previously, the sun always accompanied the Emperor. Some saw in it a token of the Grace of God, a sign to confirm to the people the fact that the Tsar was appointed not by men but by God. Others, sceptics and unbelievers considered it to be the result of excellent work on the part of the Petersburg Observatory which was always perfectly informed about the coming weather. The youngsters attributed it simply to coincidence.

Sablin firmly believed that the sun must appear, but he began to lose his confidence when he looked at the grey sky from which rain might begin to pour at any moment. Fear crept into his heart. What if it should not appear? All that the unknown passer-by had said on the previous evening, all that terror might become possible.

He approached Rotbek and spoke to him. . . .

"Pik, what about the sun?"

"The sun will shine," said Rotbek.

"But why, why?" Sablin asked with distress.

"Because the Emperor will be there, it has always been so," replied Rotbek with conviction.

"He believes," thought Sablin, "and I cannot. Oh, God! Help my belief!"

Lubovin was malignantly looking at the sky from the ranks of the 2nd section. It was he who had last night said so much to Sablin. He now saw the alarm of the young officer and saw that his words had had their effect and that if the sun should not appear—Sablin would waver and many others would waver with him. He anticipated how he would boast and rejoice over his audacity before Korjikoff. He was not afraid of Sablin.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

He had heard how he had shouted out his name the previous night. It showed that he had recognised him but was not certain. If he was uncertain about it, he would not question him. He could deny everything and Sablin would only be glad that he would not be obliged to begin an affair where there was no third witness. All the advantages were on Lubovin's side. He could say what he pleased, tell any lie, and Sablin,—what could he say? That he heard him out without interrupting? No, Sablin would not question him. It would not be to his interest. And there will be no sun! There you are with your Sovereign anointed by God! Lubovin glanced 'round at his comrades with contempt.

"What are you knocking about here for, doing nothing, Lubovin, when everyone is washing his horse's hoofs?" he heard the powerful voice of the sergeant.—"Look out, or I will give you something that will make you remember your duties!"

"I am afraid it will rain," discreetly said Lubovin.

"Rain!" drawled the sergeant.—"Idiot! We shall have sunshine! The Emperor will be here!"

## XI

THE whole field was covered by the dark squares of infantry flecked by the red spots of the epaulets and the dully shining silver and gold of the officers' uniforms. Behind the infantry was the artillery. The guns were lined up mouth to mouth, wheel to wheel. The Grand Duke \* rode round the troops on a bay horse. The Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna drove up to the Mound in a troika with a smart driver dressed in a blue silk shirt, undervest of black velvet and a cap with peacock feathers. Three nice boys in sailor suits and a little girl with beautiful chestnut hair were with her.

Accompanied by her children she went up to the top of the Mound along a broad stairway with pots of flowers bordering it, passed through the brilliant group of the Staff and foreign

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\* The Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch, brother of the Emperor Alexander III, at that time commanded the Guard Corps.

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military attaches in their dress uniforms and looked round the field.

The sky was still grey and the fog continued to smoke over Duderhof, concealing its woods and houses. Behind the Mound in a long multicoloured line on the green grass stood the regiments of the Cavalry. A broad, white stripe of the division of cuirassiers, three bright spots—red, blue and crimson of the Cossacks,—and more to the left the dark 2nd division ending in the white and red of the hussars regiment. Farther on near the Laboratory Wood, sullen as if swollen by rain, could be seen the riders and guns of the horse batteries.

The field seemed to shudder, making final preparations and verifying for the last time the alignment of the toes with a rope. The infantry men, posted to mark the respective places of the regiments, ran to join their units and those of the cavalry mounted their horses. Mounted policemen drove away from the troops hawkers of lemonade and sandwiches. An aged man carrying a long tray, his head covered by a gay cloth, could be seen running away with bent body from a mounted policeman who chased him at a trot. Two dogs were playing about on the sandy space where the troops were to defile and a policeman was running after them, vainly attempting to drive them away.

Near the Mound spectators were standing and sitting on chairs and benches which orderlies had been bringing ever since early morning. They were mostly ladies and children, officers of different Staffs, and only rarely could an elegantly dressed civilian be seen.

All the faces were turned in the direction of Krasnoie Selo. The Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch was also looking in the same direction. He was sitting on his horse with an unsheathed sword in his hand and talked in a loud voice which could be heard all over the field with his Chief of Staff, a tall, stately, grey-haired General.

"Did you notice, Nicolai Ivanovitch," the Grand Duke was saying, "the dog in the Finland regiment?"

"Your Imperial Highness," the Chief of Staff respectfully interrupted him, glancing at Krasnoie Selo.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

A troika flew out and swiftly approached the brilliant group standing between the people and Krasnoie Selo. There was the retinue, the horse of the Emperor and the carriage of the Empress.

The Grand Duke frowned and looked at Duderhof. Its shaggy summit, covered by pines, hazel and fir trees appeared from the grey clouds. The wind was tearing to pieces the fog over it and the upper houses began to be visible. Below, the pavilions and galleries of the Tartar restaurant could be clearly seen. But still there was no sun.

The troika dashed up and stopped. The Grand Duke looked at his watch. It was two minutes to eleven.

"Punctual!" he said to the Chief of Staff, "as his father, grandfather and especially his great-grandfather always were."

By a hardly noticeable gesture he crossed himself.

"Parade! Attention!" he ordered. "Battalions, shoulder arms!" The whole wet field seemed to transform itself into a hedgehog,—the infantry bristled with bayonets.

"By regiments! Present arms!"

The Grand Duke brought his heavy horse to a gallop and moved swiftly forward to meet the Emperor.

The general silence was broken by the sharp sounds of the band of H. M. Own Cossack Body Guard playing the Guard's March. The Emperor greeted the Cossacks and the hurrah rose on the right flank. The Emperor then approached the regiment of the Military Schools. The regiment shouldered arms in two distinct movements: the Cadets presented arms, and a thousand young faces turned towards the Emperor.

At the head of the Staff, on a small grey Arab horse with dark head and intelligent black eyes, lightly and gracefully rode the Tsar. His red hussar's cap was slightly set on one side. His grey eyes looked affably from under the black peak, his crimson doloman was embroidered with golden strappings, rosettes shone on his brightly polished boots and his spurs tinkled faintly.

"Good morning!" was heard in a clear voice and a shout full

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of enthusiasm came from the very heart as an answer from a thousand young breasts.

And immediately the flowing majestic melody of the Russian National Anthem floated from the flank and melted together with the exulting, youthful hurrah.

At the same moment a bright ray of sun sparkled on the crimson cap and embraced in its light the Crowned horseman, the Staff and the carriage drawn by four white horses in which sat both Empresses.

Nature seemed to have waited for this powerful cheer, for this mighty hymn full of fervent prayer before beginning its work.

An unseen wind tore to pieces the mist, and the sun shone overhead in all its splendour as if purified by the previous rain. White fleecy clouds floated on the blue sky.

The miracle was accomplished.

The Sovereign anointed by God appeared in all his glory and beauty, beautiful as in a fairy tale on his grey Arab horse which stepped proudly and lightly under him.

A demi-god was before the people and earthly thoughts left them. Their hearts soared high and felt near the heavens.

Sablin rising in his stirrups looked in the direction where louder and louder rang the hurrah, where regiment after regiment presented arms and bristled with bayonets, where it seemed that the earth itself enthusiastically sang to the heavens the Russian Hymn. He glanced round at Lubovin.

Pale, with wide-open inflamed eyes Lubovin looked from the field to the sun and back, and doubt and perplexity replaced hatred in the expression of his face.

## XII

THE hurrah became louder and mightier as fresh troops joined in it. The Emperor was reviewing the artillery. Everyone in the ranks of the cavalry straightened up.

A tall horseman mounted on a white horse with black spots commanded:

“Cavalry! Draw sabres! Carry lances!”

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Sablin had difficulty in breathing. Tears rose to his eyes.

From behind the band mounted on grey horses he could see the space between the regiments. The neighbouring regiments had already joined the cheering. The band by a quick simultaneous movement raised the instruments to their lips. The command "Gentlemen Officers" was heard and the joyful regimental march rang out. From behind the left flank of the regiment appeared the smart grey horse. Here he is!

It seemed to Sablin that the Emperor looked straight into his eyes alone. Sablin looked into the eyes of the Emperor and was saying in his thoughts:—"You see me? I am Lieutenant Sablin! Give the order—and I will die, will perish, will sink happily into the sea of death because to die for you—is happiness."

It seemed to Sablin that the Emperor heard and understood him.

How nobly kind is his face—how spiritually beautiful are his features!

The beautiful young Empress drove behind him in an open white and gold carriage drawn by four white horses with riders in tightly fitting elk-skin breeches and red gold-embroidered tunics. Then rode a brilliant Staff where each horseman personified beauty, where the grey beards and noble bearing of aged Grand Dukes and Generals were in harmony with youths beautiful as young gods—Sablin saw nothing of this. He saw only the one horseman in the crimson doloman and red cap, saw him and his horse lit by the rays of the sun, with the benevolence of the heavens resting on him.

The band lowered their instruments and stopped playing. The Emperor said only the words: "Good morning, bandsmen" but it seemed to Sablin that he had said something marvelously beautiful and magically entrancing. The trumpeters answered and the Emperor disappeared between them and the first squadron. Thence one could hear his greeting of their regiment, that touching and historically unchanging greeting. And the whole regiment shook with the answer and mightily and happily shouted hurrah.



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Sablin shouted in his young ringing voice that came from a full heart. The Emperor had ridden on long ago, but Sablin, continued to cheer, melting his voice with hundreds of other young voices. One moment he thought—"and Lubovin?" and turned round. But Lubovin was also cheering. Next to him Adamaitis shouted with a wide open mouth and large tears of happiness trickled down his cheeks. Both cheered without understanding what was happening in their souls.

Yesterday was a dream. "In our regiment nothing of that sort can take place," thought Sablin and happiness overflowed in his heart. "It is happiness to serve in our regiment."

After that, infantry marched past for a long time. One could see the sparkling of the bayonets, hear the sounds of music and the rumbling of Turkish drums. The cavalry suddenly turned by sections to the right and in section columns wheeled at a trot round the borders of the field. The smell of fresh grass was in the air, the horses trotted lightly on the sodden ground as if intoxicated by the shouts, the music, the sight of the man appointed by God. The spurs clanked, the mouth-pieces clinked, and the whole, together with the distant cheerful sounds of the Ceremonial March conveyed magic stirring feelings to the soul.

### XIII

GRITZENKO talked to the Adjutant. What had been the impression produced by their regiment passing before the Emperor?

"Excellent. Best of all the alignment. The gentlemen did not keep quite perfect and that slightly spoiled the general impression, but I watched the whole division pass and our regiment was the best. The Baron told me that the Emperor was greatly pleased and said: "my own are excellent as usual."

"Did he say that?"

"Yes. He ordered the dismissal of General Bakaeff from his command in the 2nd infantry division. He couldn't manage his horse, flew into the Suite and almost knocked the Grand Duke out of his saddle."

"Oh!"



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Horrible. I wonder where on earth he could have got such a horse."

"And what was the general impression of the parade?"

"Wonderful. The French attaché told me that he had never seen anything like it. The Army Infantry surprised him most. Small men, but their average length of step was about three feet."

"Good fellows," Gritzenko said kindly.

"Personally I don't like the way they wave their right arms, they throw them back too far."

The Adjutant trotted away towards the head of the column.

The field was becoming deserted. Carriages were driving away and long snake-like columns of regiments were vanishing in the distance. The red snake of the Hussars wound through the golden corn fields near the Laboratory Wood, the blue one of the Lancers stretched further on and the black Horse Grenadiers were disappearing on their black horses behind the hills at the Shoungorovo farm.

### XIV

AFTER dinner, hastily served at the Mess, Sablin fell asleep. He woke at five o'clock and lay on his back in sweet lassitude. Three days of rest were ahead and then Saturday and Sunday—five days in all which had to be filled somehow. In the next room Rotbek was asking his orderly in a loud whisper whether the cab had arrived.

"Where are you going, Pik?" Sablin shouted.

"To my mother at Pavlovsk," Rotbek answered and appeared in a snow-white tunic and long blue trousers.

"I will go with you and stay at the music garden of the station."

"Excellent."

Five minutes later they drove away in the ancient carriage of a Krasnoie Selo izvostchik. The end of the quiet summer day was approaching. They drove through the long village Nicolaievka where the Cossacks were leading their horses to the watering trough and barred the whole street, then through the

## TO RED FLAG

neat villages Solosi and Novaia and passed into the open fields which bordered the road.

From time to time they met carts with hay. The wheels creaked quietly, the fragrance of fresh hay filled the air mingling with a smell of pitch. They passed Sobolevo and drove down a road bordered by tall larch trees. The Tzarskoie Selo park loomed up like a dark wall on the left.

Sablin and Rotbek remained silent for a long while, thinking. Then:

"Our regiment is the best," Rotbek said with conviction as if answering his own thoughts.

"Certainly," said Sablin.

"What a pity that the officers did not keep their alignment," said Rotbek,—“I didn't either. I don't know what went wrong with my ‘Mumm,’ he pulled forward so that I couldn't do anything with my left hand alone to stop him and I had to hold my sword in the right.”

"How did my ‘Mirabeau’ do?”

"Ah, splendidly! And you ride better than I do, Sasha. I hope to learn yet. . . . But tell me. . . . I haven't spoilt things too much? And what do you think, did He notice?"

"He thanked us!" said Sablin knowing about whom Rotbek spoke, because both of them were thinking the same thoughts.

"Ah, He always praises. He cannot do otherwise. What would happen if He did not praise us?"

"It would have been terrible. I would feel like committing suicide or leaving the service!"

"Did you see what eyes He has? He looked straight at me."

"And at me, Pik, . . . Pik, isn't He a most remarkable man . . .?"

"He is more than a man. . . ."

They remained silent for some time.

"Sasha, 'asked Rotbek, 'did you notice the dress the Empress wore?"

"No, I saw only Him. I believe she had something white on."

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Or pink," said Rotbek. "My sisters will want an account of these details and what shall I tell them? I saw only Him."

"So did I."

And again they remained silent enjoying the happiness of their twenty years, of the quiet cool evening, the nice gardens and villas, and filled with the sacred feeling of love for their country.

"Stop, Pik, I will get out and walk to the station."

"Why, he shall drive you up. Or, better still, come to our house. Mother and my sisters will be very glad to see you."

Sablin thought of Rotbek's clumsy, shy and plain sisters, the eldest of whom was sixteen. They had white eyelashes, white eyebrows, always wore pink dresses just alike, did not know what to do with their sunburnt hands, answered everything by the same exclamation—"ah!" and hurried to introduce a visitor to an enervating game called "quick."

"No, dear Pik, I will call on you tomorrow, if you'll let me, but I think that today both of us would like to be alone and think it all over again."

"I understand," said Rotbek.

Sablin left the carriage and passed through the station to the great music hall. The orchestra was playing in the garden and the huge hall, with its long rows of benches before a white shell-shaped platform was almost deserted. A school boy and girl were whispering something in the shadows of the distant benches. A footman rushed up to Sablin with a programme. He took it absentmindedly and passed through the hall to the restaurant. It also was deserted. Sablin felt thirsty, sat down at a little round table and ordered tea and "éclairs," which were Pavlovsk's speciality.

He felt happy. His young, healthy body was enjoying the rest. The sounds of music, of the voices of the crowd and of footsteps on the sand floated up from the park. He listened abstractly to the music and without catching the tune felt that it dispelled thought and created a happy feeling of aloofness. Thoughts touched, vanished, and only the feeling of the joy of life remained.

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A corner of the park could be seen through the window and elegantly dressed people, officers, civilians and schoolboys walking with young ladies and girls. Sablin watched them and admired them. Two officers of the Guard Sharp-Shooters regiment, dressed in their picturesque Russian costume, passed with two young ladies, ballet dancers, and Sablin felt pleased at the thought that he also was an officer of the Guards. A cuirassier passed with a stout red-faced lady and exchanged salutes with Sablin. That was pleasant, too. He was alone at his table but he did not feel lonesome, rather as if he were at home in his own family. They were all his brothers and comrades.

Ladies and young girls passed near him and the soft fragrance of perfume reached Sablin and irritated him. He ordered another glass of tea and cakes and began to think.

He felt that something was lacking today, when his excited blood throbbed powerfully in his veins, and when with all the fibres of his soul he passionately loved the Tsar and Russia, and was in love with himself. He desired another kind of love. He longed for a woman's caresses.

He looked round. This one with a painted face and eyebrows was probably accessible. He reddened when he thought of Matzneff's advice: catch the moments of love!

Should he approach her? But how? He would burn with shame. What should he say, and how? What if she were not what he thought her to be? What a scandal then! How could he risk offending a woman so!

The women who passed him admired the handsome young officer. Some called him with their eyes. Blood boiled in him, but he did not dare approach them, grew more and more confused, and a slow fire of desire burned in him.

It seemed to him that his wishes and thoughts were evident to all around. He felt ashamed and reddened. He took off his cap and laid it on a chair, then put it on again. At moments he was full of decision and was ready to rise and approach the first woman he met. Then he would feel confused again and realized that he would never dare speak and that nothing would come of it all. He nervously sipped his cold tea, ate the cakes

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

without tasting them, looked into the distance and tried to listen to the music.

A soft voice suddenly called his name.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch, it's such a long time since I have seen you! . . ."

### XV

HE raised his eyes. Kitty stood before him, leaning on the mother o'pearl handle of a pink sunshade. Her large pink hat was placed on one side and the brim was caught up by a bird with pink wings. She wore a dress of a light, half-transparent pink material which was cut out too low for a summer costume and through which the lines of her rather plump form could be clearly seen. Her silk skirts rustled at every movement. The neat waves of her golden hair showed under the brim of her hat. It shone, and so did her teeth and her face just touched with sunburn. She was not painted, was fresh and young and her profession could be guessed only by her too free manners and general attitude. The colour of pleasure and excitement rose to Sablin's face and Kitty saw this. He would not leave her this time as he had done before, he would be hers. Kitty blushed.

Sablin jumped up. She sat down immediately and he resumed his seat.

"How nice she is," he thought, and some inner voice seemed to whisper in his ear—"and accessible! Catch the moment!"

"Would you like some tea?" he asked.

She looked into his eyes and burst into such a happy, infectious laugh that he laughed also.

"Why are you laughing?" he said.

"And why are you, dear Alexander Nicolaievitch?"

"Why?" Sablin said suddenly becoming serious. "I am happy, Ekaterina Filippovna."

"Oh," she said, "Why so formal. Call me Kitty. Aren't we friends?"

Her hand in a silk transparent glove which covered her arm up to the elbow, touched his.



## TO RED FLAG

"Tell me why you are so happy," she asked quietly and seriously.

"Ah. . . . Kitty. . . . Ekaterina Filipovna. . . . We have had the parade today."

"I know," she said.—You have seen the Emperor and he has praised your regiment."

She had lived among the officers, had often been at the barracks. Cynical and light headed, at the same time she was outwardly religious, loved the Monarch and Russia, revered the colours and had the same understanding of the honour of the uniform and of the regiment as the officers.

Sablin looked at Kitty with shining eyes.

"Do you understand," he said, "this feeling one has on seeing him. Do you love him?"

"I adore him," she said.

He looked into the very depth of her eyes, and felt a warmth rush towards his heart and make it beat happily. "How beautiful she is," he thought. He remembered an early morning in the spring and the beauty of her form lit by the quiet rays of the sun shining through the curtains. He trembled with passion.

"Would you like some tea?" he offered again.

"You have drunk a lot already. How many glasses have you had?"

"I don't remember. Four or five."

"And do you still want more?"

"No, I asked whether you would like some."

"I do not,"—she drawled,—"thank you."

She smiled.

"Look here, dear boy," she said pressing his hand lightly with the tips of her fingers,—“Are you free today, yes? You haven't promised anyone? You don't have to be on duty to-morrow?"

"No, I am free all these three days and Saturday and Sunday as well."

"How delightful! . . . Well, listen. . . ."



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

She felt confused, but so was he. He did not come to her assistance.

"I have," she said quietly,—“a ‘datcha’ here. On the Friederitzinskaya street. You will notice it immediately on the left side. Several great willows grow along the garden fence. I am alone. Quite alone. Come to see me . . . and to supper.”

He felt troubled, realising that it was he who should have invited her to supper. She understood him.

“Don’t be angry, I want it to be so.”

Sablin thought for a moment and stammered:

“I love you, Ekaterina Filipovna.”

Her face coloured with pleasure and a look of softness came over it.

“Dear Alexander Nicolaievitch! If only you knew what happiness you give me by these words. You know what I am and yet you say this. You have said it from your heart, haven’t you?”

“Yes,” Sablin said with confusion.

“And you . . . to me! Oh! how delightful! Well, listen. But will you understand? Won’t you think something bad? All that I shall tell you will be the truth. I have never loved anyone. I loved life, its brilliancy and noise, drunken revelry, songs, dresses . . . I was cold, without passion. Yes! I was different from Vladia, who is in love every day. I loved money, power, luxury. . . . And . . . listen: never, anyone . . . I have been given a nickname,—probably you have heard it—Katia the philosopher. But I fell in love with you as soon as I set my eyes on you when you defended Gritzenko’s Zahar. You are a man, Alexander Nicolaievitch, not only a handsome officer. At first I didn’t look at it seriously and asked Steepochka to send you with me, but then, when you scorned my beauty,” Kitty dropped her voice to a whisper, “I realized how I loved you! How I waited for you! I almost went mad. I hoped you would come. But you didn’t . . . cruel boy! I watched you, I found out whether you had fallen in love with someone. But you . . . don’t even know women.”

Sablin reddened deeply.

"What rapture!" Kitty whispered. "But listen, listen— Do not despise and push me away. . . . We also have hearts, we lost women. . . . We love once and we perish in the flames of this love. . . . Some of us live in brilliant surroundings of luxury and diamonds, but they never love those who bring them these gifts. Each has a secret lover who not only gives her nothing, but takes from her and beats her sometimes. And she loves him still. . . . I know that it will be my misfortune that I have fallen in love with you. I know that you will leave me soon and that nothing can keep you back. Let it be so. One day at least—but it will be mine!"

"Why do you say such things, Ekaterina Filipovna,—I don't know myself . . . but I admire you and perhaps I already love you."

"Oh, don't . . . don't say this. But . . . it is wrong for us to talk here. There are too many people around. It is impossible for you in your uniform. It would not matter were we just to say a few words, but we cannot stay long together when so many people are around. . . . You will come then, yes . . .?"

"Ekaterina Filipovna! Let us go together!"

"No, no! That is quite out of the question!"

She stretched out her hand.

"In half an hour," she said, "on the Frideritzinskaya. Keep your word."

He pressed her hand warmly. She went out of the restaurant and Sablin could see her through the glass walls as she descended the steps into the garden and went away with bent head through the park.

It was just in time. Rotbek and his three sisters, all in pink, all ruddy, pimpled and with curiosity in their light eyes emerged from the crowd and went toward the restaurant. They were the last people whom Sablin wanted to see at that moment. He thought only of Kitty and longed only for her. He rose, paid for his tea and went towards the station platform. He sat down there under the big clock and nervously watched the slow

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movement of the hands over the thirty minutes which separated him from the meeting with Kitty.

They seemed to last eternally. He waited for twenty minutes and then decided to go on foot so as to grow calmer and pull his nerves together.

From the park Kitty rushed to a shop and purchased zakouskas, fruit, sweets and wine so as to receive her guest properly.

### XVI

It was already dark when Sablin entered the Frideritzinskaya street. He found the datcha without difficulty. The air was full of the fragrance of blossoming tobacco and stocks, sweet peas twined round the glass-paned balcony. The curtains were drawn, but through them came rosy light, the sounds of a piano and Kitty's voice full of pain and passion.

Sablin halted and listened. The whole scene seemed as if taken from an opera or a fairy tale. The great spreading willows of the deserted street were drowned in the darkness. No passers by were to be seen. The light shone brightly through the foliage and a soft voice sang of love and of passion.

Kitty felt Sablin's footsteps and opened the door before he had time to ring the bell.

"We are alone," she said, "quite alone. I have sent away my maid and there is no one in the house. Take off your overcoat and your sword."

The balcony was dimly lit by a red lamp. The open piano in a corner, the simple furniture and the wolf's skin on the floor,—all was commonplace but seemed beautiful to Sablin.

A samovar was humming in the dining room. Ham, cold chicken, sturgeon, various cakes and bottles of wine and cognac adorned the table.

Kitty wore the same pink dress but she had covered its deep cut by a shawl as if she were ashamed of it before Sablin. She felt pleasure in her role of hostess, in watching his beautiful eyes become dimmed by the wine. Passion was overwhelming her.

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"How about some roast beef? It is in the ice-cellar. Will you carry the candle for me?"

He could not refuse. It seemed so amusing to pass through the yard with her and to watch her through a little door in the flickering light of the candle as she groped on the snow which covered the floor of the ice-cellar.

"Dear, here are some raspberries. Would you like some?"

They walked back together through the dark yard over which the stars shone high up in the sky and the willows whispered mysteriously; they passed up the creaking steps to the kitchen and into the dining room where it was so cosy in the light of the hanging lamp.

They picked over the berries, Kitty's fingers became pink, he kissed them and she laughed a nervous excited laugh. The whole day had been full of magic happiness and love and it must end in the same way.

The supper was finished. The clock struck half past eleven, everything had been talked over. Had he to get up and leave?

Kitty rose. She was overwhelmed by a burning sense of confusion. Sablin approached her, but words of farewell vanished from his lips. She stretched both her arms towards him and he seized them in his hands. They were soft, warm and slightly moist.

"Well!?" she said and drew nearer to him.

An unknown force pushed him towards her and they united in a long kiss.

He staggered as if drunk when they separated and he saw as if through a mist the happy blue eyes and the golden locks of hair on the forehead.

Silently Kitty left the dining room. He followed her and passed through the little dark drawing room to the bed room which was lit by a violet lantern hanging on gold chains from the ceiling.

Kitty leaned on Sablin's breast and remained motionless with half closed eyes. He clasped her tenderly in his arms.

She raised her head, her lips forming into a childish smile.

"Dear," she said, "call me your little mouse."

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Tears appeared in her eyes but he covered them with kisses. "Ah!" she said. "I am so happy, so happy!"

### XVII

THESE days were full of an ecstasy of love and passion.

They would get up at four o'clock in the morning when the sun had not yet risen behind the dark woods, would dress hurriedly and walk down the quiet sleepy streets wet with dew. They would halt on the bridge with the statues of stags, would look at the water which rippled under the rays of the rising sun and enjoy the cool morning breeze as it caressed their burning cheeks. They would go farther on into the park where the grass had been mown and where stood long stacks of fragrant hay. Larks sang in the blue morning sky, quails called each other, grasshoppers trilled and they were the only human beings in the midst of Nature at that early hour when all slept.

They would sleep on the hay until the sun rose over the stack and looked into their happy faces. Then they would wake and look round with fright. Had anyone seen them?

Kitty would arrange her hair, pin her hat on and he had to perform the function of a mirror for her. She had hair pins between her lips with which she was lazily fixing her thick hair.

"Look," she said, her lips still tightly pressed together,—*"is my hat on straight?"*

"Yes," he said.

"Oh, you nasty boy, you don't even look!"

It was true, he did not. He was admiring her round white arms where the muscles moved under a silky skin after each movement of the fingers.

"Sasha, do look, I shall look a fright. Ah! I am so hungry!"

"So am I, my little mouse, let us go to the farm restaurant."

They went arm-in-arm, thoughtful and simple like children. Nature smiled on them. Long crimson fir apples laughed at them from the high firs, the park attracted them by its coolness.

"You can't come in with me to the farm, there are too many people there," Kitty said,—*"I will enter alone and you shall*



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come some time after and sit down at my table as if by chance. We won't even talk, as if we weren't acquainted."

The farm was full of people. Princess Repnin sat with her children and an English governess in a little curtained pavilion. There were many children, students and young girls in the gallery. Maids in white aprons served milk, coffee and tea with black rye bread and biscuits; the place smelled of cows. A peacock shrieked piercingly.

Kitty entered trying to wear a most innocent and independent air. Her face was burning. Her hair was in disorder and her dress was crumpled. People looked at her sideways. Everyone knew her—Katia the philosopher.

She sat down trying to pay no attention to unfriendly glances and ordered coffee and a glass of cream.

A moment later Sablin entered. There were many free tables but he approached Kitty and ceremoniously asked for permission to sit down at her table. They tried to be silent but Kitty could not restrain herself and said, her lips hardly moving:

"I love you madly."

He lowered his eyes, reddened and answered in a whisper:

"My dear little mouse!"

And both laughed.

Then, each having finished their coffee and cream and each having paid for it separately, they left. He went first and she followed soon after. Everyone saw their comedy and criticized them. They alone noticed nothing.

He waited for her under a fir tree with crimson fir apples. They went on arm-in-arm together.

At the house she let him alone until lunch. Then it was served with many courses and wines that he liked. She found them out by clever questioning. After lunch he reclined on the sofa and she sang. She sang like all the Petersburg young girls of the time. Neither well nor badly. She had much musical feeling, a badly pitched voice and liked unfinished fragments of songs speaking of passion, love and unsatisfied feeling. She began to sing in French or in Russian, stopped before finishing,

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idly fingered the keys, played a melodious waltz and began something else.

Sablin dozed. Sometimes he opened his eyes and gazed at her happily. Her cheeks were glowing, the eyes seemed large between the darkened eyelids and shone softly. He closed his eyes again and listened in sweet lassitude.

The same tune was repeated for a second time. Deep pain was felt in it and Sablin opened his eyes.

"I want to love and to suffer again!" Kitty sang passionately the last line and burst out weeping. She knew why she wept. Her heart was being torn by the torture of knowing that she would love for so short a time, and suffer . . . the whole of her life.

Sablin rushed to soothe her, but she continued to weep on his breast and for a long time he could not calm her. To all his questions she answered:

"Don't ask, my dear. It's from happiness!"

## XVIII

THEY hired horses at a riding school and rode towards Gatchino. The weather was hot. They stopped an ice hawker near the Orlovsky wood, dismounted, purchased ices, sat down on the sloping bank of the road and ate the ices with little wooden splinters from little pasteboard plates. The horses grazed near by and their heads almost touched Kitty's pretty face. The dark wood rustled behind them and the oaks whispered mysteriously. Their hearts were calm and quiet. When they returned home she lay wearily on a sofa and he read newspapers in an arm chair.

Every day brought new pleasures. He drove to the regiment on Saturday, passed four hours at scouting drill, learned that there would be none on Monday but that on Tuesday the regiment would start for the manœuvres. He returned towards dinner-time to Kitty refreshed by his visit to the regiment and desirous of new caresses, passion and kisses.

But little by little he grew weary of the passion. On Mon-

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day he left without much regret and drove to Krasnoie Selo promising to return for dinner.

He arrived at his cottage towards one o'clock and learned that the Adjutant had sent for him three times in the morning and that a note from the office was waiting for him on his table. Unpleasant forebodings rose in his heart.

The note was official. "Your Honour should report to Colonel Prince Repnin immediately upon your return to the camp. Uniform to be worn—tunic, sword . . ." Such a tone promised nothing good. Sablin got ready and went to Repnin who lived in his own "datcha" built on the slope of the hill not far from the Officers' Mess. The datcha was large and built of wooden beams in an affected Russian style with carved figures of cocks over the front steps and balcony. An orderly, dressed in a blue livery with large flat buttons embossed with the insignia of the Prince, opened the door.

"His Excellency asks you to wait a little," he said, "they are lunching."

That also was a bad sign. How could the amiable and hospitable Repnin lunch, while an officer of his regiment, his comrade, waited for him.

The Prince would have invited him to lunch, would have offered him coffee, cigars, if something unusual had not happened—and of course unpleasant, Sablin began to think. He guessed the reason of the summons. The matter would have a relation to Kitty, and he frowned.

He passed to the drawing room, a large room, the walls covered with panels of polished wood, and hung with English lithographs of famous race horses. A massive table of heavy oak littered with newspapers and illustrated magazines stood in the middle of the room. Sablin walked about it and looked at the lithographs.

Prince Repnin, a veteran officer and A. D. C. of the Emperor, whose father and grandfather had served in the same regiment, was the President of the Officer's Court of Honour and a strict guardian of the regimental traditions and of the dignity of its uniform. No one knew as well as he did the history and the

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

traditions of the regiment. Stiff, always clad in a tight-fitting tunic cut by the best tailor, never getting drunk in any circumstances, he inspired terror in the young officers by his cold countenance alone. He did everything well but was never enthusiastic about anything. He rode well and had an excellent horse, but he was not a sportsman. He was an excellent marksman, was the member of an aristocratic hunting society, was often invited to the Imperial hunts, but he was not a hunter. He played coldly at whist and bezique but had never been seen at a game of chance.

He was married and had two daughters, young girls who were as stiff as he, and spoke English better than they did Russian. His wife, a grey haired Lady-in-Waiting of the Empress, was the full complement of her husband. She was quite mad on society customs, calls and conversations, guarded the traditions of the regiment even more strictly than did her husband and always took care that the officers behaved properly in society. It was rumoured that several years previously she had had an intrigue abroad with some Italian Prince, but that intrigue passed so secretly, was so stiffly correct, that even those who spoke about it were never certain in their hearts about the truth of their words. She watched the behaviour of the ladies of the regiment, pronounced undebatable verdicts as to which intrigue was decent and which stained the name of the husband and brought disgrace on the regiment. She saw to it that the officers did not walk arm-in-arm with artists, of whatever good family they might be. The officers feared her sharp tongue and imperious habits. She let everyone understand that she was descended in a straight line from the Ruriks, that her ancestors had held a high position at the court of the Tsar Alexei Mihailovitch and that she kept letters of the Tsar addressed to her great-grandfather.

She had only one weakness. She loved to see young officers married and to find suitable matches for them which in all respects would be favourable for the regiment.

Sablin thought of all this as he waited in the drawing room. Half an hour passed, but no one came.

## TO RED FLAG

Sablin grew more and more irritated against Repnin and frowned more and more deeply.

"I shall tell him all that I think of him," he decided at the moment when the door was opened and the orderly in livery said :

"Please, Your Honour, His Excellency asks you to come to his study."

Sablin hated the orderly too. It seemed to him that the livery made the soldier impertinent and that he looked contemptuously at him—a Lieutenant!

### XIX

PRINCE REPNIN stood behind his massive writing table clad in his tightly buttoned tunic. He did not ask Sablin to sit down and did not shake hands with him. His cold steel gaze pierced the young man and made him stop and involuntarily stand to attention.

"Lieutenant Sablin," Prince Repnin began in a cold official tone,—“I have invited you here because . . . I personally knew and deeply respected your father. I believe . . . I want to believe that our regiment is sacred to you. I am therefore surprised at the light-headed way in which you have treated the honour of your uniform. You have stained it, Lieutenant Sablin. . . . I do not convoke the Officer's Court of Honour only because I am certain that my words will suffice to make you put an end to your pernicious intrigue.”

"Prince," Sablin began, "Your Excellency. . . ."

Repnin commanded silence by a cold glance of his shining grey eyes.

"I haven't finished speaking, Lieutenant Sablin," he said coldly,—“I have not called you for the purpose of listening to your explanations or excuses. You can have none. Only a definite promise to give up your pernicious passion for this girl of the streets. . . ."

"Your Excellency . . . I won't allow. . . ." Sablin began, pale and breathing heavily; but the cold piercing gaze of Repnin again brought him to silence.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"I do not interfere with your physical needs, Lieutenant Sablin, but no one displays them publicly as you have allowed yourself to do. How could you venture to walk arm-in-arm with a girl of the streets at the Pavlovsk concert?! You have ridden with her, you have visited with her the farm and other places where our families meet! Lieutenant Sablin,—strictly speaking,—you ought to leave our regiment because you don't know how to wear its uniform with honour. Yes! Leave the regiment. This is no laughing matter, Lieutenant Sablin! But I take into consideration your youth and will leave the matter without any consequences. I have conferred with other senior officers and we have decided to close our eyes to these events under the condition that you will immediately, today, put an end to this intrigue."

"Your Excellency," Sablin said gasping.—"I . . ."

"Lieutenant Sablin, I repeat that I haven't called you for explanations. You have heard what I have said and I hope that you have understood me. You can go!"

One—two, Sablin turned, distinctly clanking his spurs, and walked out of Prince Repnin's study, his eyes dimmed by tears of indignation.

He did not realise how he reached his cottage.

The slippery boards of the side-walk rising up the slope were under his feet, the autumn sun was shining dully and clouds shut it out of sight from time to time. Sablin noticed nothing of this. He was shaking all over with anger and excitement.

He had been insulted and so had she. She, who was his first love. She, who had given herself to him with such limitless passion!

What was he to do? Revenge himself! Challenge Colonel Repnin to a duel! He would make him understand that the woman he loved was no girl of the streets and that he, Lieutenant Sablin, would not allow him to speak of his sacred love so cynically and impertinently as he had done. He would marry Kitty! That was all. And let . . . let Princess Repnin receive her and shake her hand afterwards. Yes, he would marry her. And why not? At heart she was purer than many

## TO RED FLAG

other young girls. At any rate she would be faithful to him. Everyone in the regiment knew that Manotskoff visited Mrs. Matzneff and spent the night at her flat when Matzneff was on guard, everyone knew that Petristscheva lived with Lieutenant Speransky . . . and all were silent. . . . And what was Kitty? . . . He would marry her . . . Just to make them angry. . . .

He tried to think of Kitty as his wife. Every day would bring her caresses, her sweet conversation and the scent of perfume, hyacinths, and powder. Sablin shook his head. He had had enough of them during these five days and wanted a rest from them. And if he married her he would have them every day. . . . Every day he would hear the badly played piano and the unfinished songs of love and passion.

The regimental holiday would come. The Empress, the Grand Duchess and Kitty with her simple kind smile and round white arms would sit in a large box at the riding school decorated by flowers and by the colours of the regiment. Sablin bent his head. He realised that it was impossible. Repnin was right. She was not a lady of the regiment. The regiment demanded other women and other relations with them.

His satisfied passion did not wake and cold reason began to dominate in him. He had to choose: she or the regiment. Our regiment—so beautiful, mighty and great. Our regiment, closely bound to Russia and to the Tsar.

Sablin understood more and more clearly that his relations with Kitty should have been different and that he could have loved her then. But was that so?

Dusk was creeping into the little room. Faint light penetrated through the small window, clouds crept over the sky and rain was coming. Sablin paced about the room, muttered curses, angrily clenched his fists and his face reddened. Then he grew silent and thoughtful.

He remembered the luxurious lunches, dinners and suppers that Kitty had arranged for him. Wine, cognac, liqueurs. She had purchased everything herself. But on what money? Where did she get the money to arrange all this for him?

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

He stopped before the window, buried his hands in his pockets and even whistled.

"Lieutenant Sablin," he told himself,—what a fool you are and what a . . . scoundrel. . . ."

He called his orderly and sent him to tell the *izvostchik* to get ready to return to Pavlovsk with a letter and sat down to write.

"Dear Kitty," he began, "circumstances have taken such a turn that it is impossible for me to come today. Tomorrow the manœuvres begin and we shall thus be separated for a fortnight. Farewell, dear little mouse, wish me a good journey and don't think badly of me. I kiss your sweet lips a thousand times. We shall see each other after the manœuvres. Wait for me and don't grieve. Good-bye. Your Sasha."

Sablin put five hundred rubles into the envelope, but when he had sealed it he realized that money would offend her. She had loved and given herself to him in such a way that it was not necessary or possible to pay for it.

Sablin unsealed the letter, took out the money and began to think. "What about the dinners, the suppers, the wine." He added: "P.S. Little mouse, I am your debtor. Let me know how much the entertainment has cost you and I will settle it. I don't want you to spend money on me. A. S."

He sealed it and sent it off.

## XX

KITTY burst into tears when she received the letter. She knew that he would leave her. But so soon! She had not expected it. In five days, in five happy days the whole of her life had been burnt and nothing remained. She did not even have his photograph. She had not thought of asking for it then and she realized that now he would not give it. This short "P.S." about the money, this business-like tone made her understand everything. She realized that Sasha and his little mouse existed no longer and that only the Lieutenant of our regiment Sablin and Katia the philosopher remained. A portrait of Sasha could have adorned the table of his little mouse, but Katia the philosopher could not have a portrait of Lieutenant Sablin.

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Kitty wept, rolling on her bed and burying her face in the pillows.

She would have committed suicide had she had poison at hand. But she decided otherwise when the thought came to her. She had to see him once more, she had to say good-bye properly and then let happen what may! She would not mind whatever it was. She would live in the past, should she continue to live. It had all been—the walks through the park, the morning coffee at the farm and the rides on horseback to the Orlovsky wood near Gatchino. It had all been. . . . She would come to that bench when she would feel sick at heart and would dream there of him. She would die with his name on her lips if life became too unbearable.

“Eh! It doesn’t matter!” she exclaimed in despair. “Miserable . . . that I am! I deserve it!”

Kitty jumped up, rushed to the mirror and began to wipe away the traces of tears and to arrange her hair. She tried on several hats and chose one that was most becoming and elegant, forgetting about the rain which had begun to patter, thin and persistent, promising to continue for the rest of the day.

She drove to a shop and purchased his favourite sweets and zakouskas to present him for the manœuvres. Not only would she take nothing from him, but she would shower presents on him at their parting. This was her pride and this comforted her. She drove up to his house at Krasnoie Selo about nine o’clock in the evening. Her face was covered by a fine mist of rain, but she had only one thought—to find him alone. Quite alone.

Rotbek was not home. Sablin was packing his things for the manœuvres assisted by his orderly. The sergeant had sent a message that the wagon with the officers’ luggage would start at five o’clock in the morning.

Sablin was surprised and pleased when she entered but he was also greatly confused. He sent his orderly to prepare the samovar and fidgeted about on one spot not knowing where to ask her to sit down.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Kitty, dear! How is it that you have come? It is nice of you. You are wet through, my poor little mouse!"

He tried to warm her cold hands in his. She was chilled by the drive through the cold wind and the rain.

"You will catch a cold, you mad girl! We'll have some hot tea immediately."

She was looking attentively at him, as if she wanted to drink his features and to carry them away with her forever. Her lips quivered, her teeth chattered from cold but even more from inner feverish excitement.

"You start for the manœuvres tomorrow," she said.

"Yes, for about a fortnight. And then . . . I will come to you. If you allow?"

"You are packing," she said bending down so as to conceal the tears that dimmed her eyes.

"What have you put here? Have you got two pairs of greased boots?"

"One," he answered.

"And you have packed it. You must be quite mad. What will you wear?"

"My patent leather ones," Sablin said.

"In such weather! You will only spoil them and will catch cold. . . . No, no, that is no good. . . . Why have you so many starched shirts? You have put them in with the boots,—they will get crumpled. Now,—sir,—take off your patent leather boots and put on these, I will pack everything differently."

Kitty had pulled herself together and had regained control of herself. She wanted to be useful and to replace a mother to him. He had none, the poor orphan. Who would think of him?

"Sasha, see, here I put woolen socks, you must wear them when the weather is such as it is now. Here is the underclothing, here are the boots wrapped in paper and here on the top I put a clean night-shirt, your book, and with them a small present from myself: your favourite klukva marmelade and some 'polendvitza.' You may not want to go to the Mess some



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damp day and will drink tea at your tent. You will think of me then."

The packing case was transformed. Sablin and the orderly could not manage to get everything in and had been thinking of an additional basket. Kitty had packed everything and still there was room left. The orderly brought the samovar and carried the packing case away to the squadron. They remained alone. Rain poured stubbornly outside and fell with a metallic sound on the pools of water; a lamp was burning brightly in the room and the fragrance of perfume was strong. They sat and drank tea in silence. They had nothing to speak about. All the words of love had been said during those five days of insane passion and they could find no new ones. Suffering had left traces on her face and it had lost its attractiveness. Rotbek or the orderly might return at any moment and they had to hurry.

"My dear, my darling, will you remember me!?" she asked.

"Kitty, we are not parting forever, why are you so queer to-day?"

She began to cry.

He tried to comfort her.

"Don't, . . . don't, dear," she said as he kissed her.

Time was passing. He began to hurry her. It did not occur to him that it was a dark rainy night, that she might be afraid to drive alone along the deserted road. In after years he always reddened painfully at the thought of these moments. He would never have let his wife, sister or the wife of a friend leave alone in such weather. She felt that she was in the way and began to get ready to leave. She hastily put on her hat and did not think of arranging her hair,—what did it matter now. She felt hurt and ashamed. She realised that beauty had gone out of their love. She was no longer the faithful loving companion of Sasha, but a girl who had come to visit a Guards officer. Afterwards Kitty wondered why she had not killed herself then and there.

"Farewell," she said.

He stood with his back turned. He had again produced his

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

five hundred rubles and was clumsily folding them with the purpose of placing them behind the bodice of her gown. "I believe that is the way it is done," he thought feeling greatly confused.

She saw the money and understood.

"Sasha," she exclaimed growing pale,—“you won't do this, you won't insult me! My love for you was too sacred!”

She fell on her knees before him, clasped his feet in her arms and kissed them.

“Farewell,” she said faintly, rose and went out of the door. He ran to help her into the cab. The driver was asleep inside and for some time could not understand what was wanted of him. Meanwhile she waited shivering in her light silk mantilla. She did not even have an umbrella. A transparent glove covered one of her hands, the other she had forgotten in the cottage and did not want to return for it. That was a bad sign. Let it remain there and remind him of her. Both felt ill at ease and wished that the last moments of the parting would come more quickly. At last she got into the carriage and it moved out of the yard. Kitty huddled up in a corner and wept shivering in spasmodic convulsions.

“Poor girl!” thought the *izvostchik*, “she must have suffered much.”

He was an old Krasnoie Selo *izvostchik*. He had lived all his life there and knew what had happened. In the past he had seen many similar dramas, many feminine tears and hysterics. Afterwards many poisoned, shot or drowned themselves.

“They mostly drowned themselves,” he concluded his rumination with philosophical calm.

“Yes, pretty things have happened. This one is done for too, I should think. She won't get over it. She's had a good time and now—well, the road is the same for them all!”

## XXI

THE band rode round the village and played the “General March” as a signal that it was time to saddle the horses. But the careful sergeants had seen to that long ago and the section

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corporals were now inspecting the men in the yards to see that all was in order.

The rain promised to last for several days. It was thin, drizzling, cold, penetrating and methodical. The men shivered in their shirts and gathered in groups in the shelter of the barns as they waited for the order to lead out their horses. Patches of fog floated over the earth and everything looked sad and dejected. The leaves of the birch trees had begun to grow yellow in that one night. Everything bore signs of the coming autumn. The music had a hoarse sound in the damp air.

Sablin slept soundly. Rotbek, who had just returned from Pavlovsk and was quite ready to start, took energetic measures to wake him.

"Get up, you beggar. You'll have to miss your tea again. That's all women's work," he said, looking at the glove which had been forgotten on the table and noticing the fragrance of perfume in the air.—"Eh, Sasha! Sasha!"

"What is it?" growled Sablin.

"You'll sleep through the manœuvres."

"What time is it?"

"Quarter past seven and we have to be lined up by half past."

"I shan't be late," and with the assistance of his smart orderly Sablin managed not only to dress but also to have some tea.

The squadrons were slowly moving along the road. The officers rode in groups in front. All were in summer tunics, except Matzneff who was wrapped in a rain coat and used bad language when he referred to the order of the Regimental Commander that the officers should be in summer tunics as an example for their men.

"Every Baron has his own fancies," he growled. "He just won't understand that one can't deceive the soldiers by this. Every officer has a warm jersey or a leather vest underneath while the soldiers have nothing. What is the use of it then? He won't take into consideration that the soldiers are under twenty-three years of age while I am thirty. I have rheu-

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

matism and I will suffer if I get drenched. It's all right for fellows like Sasha or Pik, they don't mind."

"We don't," Sablin answered.—"But, Pavel Ivanovitch, why haven't the men been allowed to put on their overcoats?"

"Eh, you youngsters!" Gritzenko exclaimed, "think a little. In the army nothing is done without purpose."

"Baron's fancies," growled Matzneff.

"Funny person, you are!" said Gritzenko with a sparkle in his gypsy eyes. "The soldier must have something dry to cover himself with when the day's march is ended. His great coat takes the place of a blanket and everything else for him. What shall he cover and warm himself with if he gets drenched? The Baron is a soldier. He knows his job, well—I think it must be the twentieth year that he has watched manœuvres round Krasnoie Selo. He has had time to study the climate."

The regiment was nearing Gatchino. The high fence of the palace park appeared on the right. Weeping willows bent low over transparent ponds. Fog rolled over the groups of trees in the park and the sadness of the North filled the misty air. The spirit of the quaint, whimsical Emperor Paul haunted the place and everything reminded one of him.

The band played the regimental march.

"Won't you call forward the singers?" said Lieutenant Fetisoff,—“perhaps the Dowager Empress may come to the window.”

"You're right," said Gritzenko and shouted:—"Singers! To the front!"

"What Empress," growled Matzneff, "no good man would send his dog outdoors in such weather and he hopes that the Empress will come out to marvel at him!"

"Don't you hear the band?" Fetisoff remarked.

"Well, let them play," Matzneff said,—“they've no pity on the men!” The singers had felt warmer in the ranks and now rode out unwillingly. Lubovin did not leave his place at all. The sergeant saw from the rear of the squadron and dashed out with a riding whip in his hands.

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"Why are you playing the aristocrat here Lubovin? Haven't you heard the order for the singers?" he shouted sternly.

"I've a sore throat, Ivan Karpovitch," Lubovin answered hoarsely.

"I'll show you how to have sore throats! Forward, scoundrel!" and the sergeant hit the croup of Lubovin's horse with his stick. It reared and Lubovin galloped to the front of the squadron which was approaching the palace.

The singers of the second squadron sang hoarsely a song relating to the campaign of 1812, in front the band played a waltz "The Gitana" and from behind, where the third squadron was came the sounds of a tambourine, sharp whistling and separate fragments of a merry song floating through the general uproar.

The squadrons were ascending the slope towards a square with a tall grey obelisk, and winding round it approached the gates of Gatchino. Grey withered fields lay before them, a dark wood loomed in the distance through patches of rolling fog. The cold rain continued to pour, white steam from the horses rose over the regiment. . . .

The songs quieted down. . . .

## XXII

THEY had been marching for two days and for two days the rain had poured. The sergeant's face assumed an anxious expression. The horses were growing thin and ate their oats unwillingly and did not lie down on the damp earth at the bivouacs. The rifles needed to be cleaned and the saddle cloths dried. Two of the horses had already got sore backs because the saddle cloths had been wet the first day and the soldiers who had been guilty of the neglect now followed the squadron on foot. The third day was to be a day of rest near the manor of Baron Wolff "The White House." The officers looked forward with great expectations to that day. A dinner at the manor was expected, fireworks, music, dancing, singers. . . . The whole division was to assemble there by that time and was to encamp in a huge bivouac on the fields of Baron Wolff's estate which were covered by stacks of reaped corn.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The regiment arrived at the bivouac about three o'clock in the evening of the day of rest. Men had been detailed beforehand for the disposal of Divisional Headquarters. They had already marked the corners of the bivouac and the squadrons now began to strike the picket lines. From every direction came the noise of voices, whinnying of horses and the tapping of hammers on poles. The rain had ceased. Thick fog was descending lower and lower and some experienced meteorologists asserted that it was a sign of coming hot, sunny weather; others, pessimists, did not believe that was possible and said that the movement of the fog was a sign of new rains coming.

The soldier bivouacs were stretched out in straight lines. Everything had been measured out, the saddles had been laid along the picket lines, the intervals had been verified. A large tent had been pitched behind each squadron and the squadron aristocrats—the sergeant major, the Quartermaster sergeant, the clerk and the forager,—settled in it. Forage was being stowed away nearby and heavy scales were hung up on a tripod. Farther on field kitchens were smoking. The orderly officer had seen to their being lined up so that their chimneys formed one straight line. Only the officers' tents were out of harmony with the beauty of the bivouacs' perfect alignment. They were of various sizes and patterns. Gritzenko and Fetisoff had a round Turkish tent, Matzneff a green Indian tent with a white roof and Sablin and Rotbek had a Danish one. A coloured ensign flew over each tent. The ensigns were of various sizes, shapes and colours. Each officer had his tent pitched in the place he chose. Lovers of Nature settled among the bushes which bordered a brook, more delicate persons who feared humidity moved to the summit of a hillock, others, desirous of calm and privacy, removed their tents half a verst from the bivouac. The whole field round the bivouac was dotted by the multi-coloured spots of these tents, which gave to the whole the appearance of a gypsy encampment.

On the morning of the day of rest the weather was beautiful. The sun swam out into the sky, shining warmly and happily after the three days of its absence. The dark clouds disappeared

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and a huge pink cloud remained motionless on the horizon. The sergeants roused their men at five o'clock in the morning. There was so much work to be done that they feared it would not be finished that day. Apart from the usual but thorough grooming of the horses it was necessary to wash the shirts, trousers, underwear and saddle cloths, and to have time to dry them, to clean and oil the rifles, pipeclay and polish the belts and straps and to clean the stirrups and bits. From early morning the bivouac bustled like an ant-hill. Horse-blankets were spread out on the ground and half-naked men sat on them and cleaned their rifles with frenzy while their underwear and shirts, which they had washed in the river were being dried. Section corporals in coloured under-shirts walked up and down the lines, their hands in their pockets, and watched keenly that no one should lose time or be idle.

Cossacks bathed their horses in the river near by and rode naked along the banks. Their shirts had also been washed and were being dried on the bushes. Shouts and yells came from the river.

The tumult and the noise which reigned all around did not prevent the officers from sleeping. It was eleven o'clock in the morning but most of the tents were closed on all sides. They slept because they had nothing else to do.

Gritzenko was sitting undressed on his bed and twanged his guitar with melancholy, Fetisoff lay with his head covered by a blanket. Matzneff also sat undressed in his tent and read a French book—"Mademoiselle Girot—ma femme." Sablin and Rotbek slept the sound sleep that is only possible on a delightful sunny morning at the age of twenty. The orderlies waited near the tents of their officers with jugs of water, soap and towels, and with tea and coffee pots ready for serving.

Cooks in white caps and aprons bustled round the tents of the Officer's Mess. Some of the senior officers drank tea or coffee there or read newspapers just brought from the station.

For the officers the manœuvres were a holiday, a merry, noisy picnic. They had no worries and no work to do. The soldiers and the officers lived far apart from each other. All the hard-

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ships of the manœuvres had to be borne by the soldiers. After long and weary marches they had to groom their horses, to fetch the forage and carry it on their backs, clean their rifles, saddles and boots. The officers had orderlies for that purpose. When the regiment did not stop in a village the soldiers of the cavalry had to sleep on the ground, wrapping themselves in their overcoats because the cavalry had no tents. Many caught cold and were sick afterwards. Cases of dysentery and of typhus were recorded in many regiments after the manœuvres. The officers had their own tents and in bad weather were quartered in peasant cottages or in the houses of landowners.

Notwithstanding all this, most of the officers disliked the manœuvres. Many tried to obtain leave for this period. On the contrary the soldiers liked the manœuvres in spite of all the hardships and difficulties. Life at that time reminded them of their native villages, they came in touch with peasants, saw the fields and the woods, often drank milk and ate not only government bread but also peasant bread. Manœuvres resembled war, the service took on meaning and became understandable. They pursued enemy patrols, took prisoners, came in contact with other regiments at large bivouacs, met their fellow villagers whom they had not seen for some time and learned the news from home. The difficulties of the work and the weariness were forgotten and the soldiers felt freer.

Songs, jests and laughter were heard here and there in the bivouac which was warmed by the rays of the sun. The soldiers paid no attention to the fact that the gentlemen slept. What else could they do? They would have only been in the way.

They were gentlemen. They belonged to two different worlds. The officers and the soldiers. Two worlds that were living side by side and yet were inaccessible to each other.

Sablin felt that, as he watched the bivouac from his tent. It seemed to him that he ought to go to the soldiers, do something, speak about something to them. Gritzenko was twanging his guitar in the next tent and Sablin went to him.

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"Pavel Ivanovitch, should I go to the squadron? Perhaps I ought to do something," he asked.

Gritzenko stopped playing, raised his large dark eyes, looked at him with surprise and said: "Why? You will only be in the way. The sergeants and the corporals will manage better without you."

### XXIII

AT five o'clock they went to dine at the house of the proprietor of the estate. As they approached the gates of the park, officers of the Cossack regiment rode in with their Commander at their head. Sablin stepped aside to let them pass. A stout red-faced General with long grey moustache—a typical Taras Boulba\*—rode at their head on a bay stallion. A silver nagaika hung over his shoulder; broad "sharovari," soft-leather boots, a long tunic and a cap set far back gave him a smart Asiatic appearance. The horses of the Cossacks were of a lighter build and smarter looking than those of Sablin's regiment. Lightly and freely, unhindered by curbs, they passed with long strides through the gates with highly raised heads and quivering nostrils. There was something particularly light in their movement. Involuntarily Sablin thought: "That is real cavalry!"

The host, Baron Constantine von Wolff, stood at the top of a stone terrace and met his guests. He was dressed in a black coat, a white waistcoat and summer checked trousers. In his button-hole he wore the ribbon of the Prussian Iron Cross which he had received in the last war with the French. His wife, a beautiful fair-haired woman of about forty, stood at his side in a lilac dress with white lace trimmings. She was a Maid of Honour of both Empresses.

The tables for dinner were set in a meadow under old lime trees which had been planted by Peter the Great, according to a local legend, after his conquest of Ingermanland.† Two bands

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\* A legendary Cossack hero.

† Ingermandland is the ancient name of the country surrounding Petrograd.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

and two choirs of singers—of the Cossacks and of Sablin's regiment,—stood under the lime trees. Rotbek, Speransky and two daughters of the Baron, the twenty-year-old Sofia and seventeen-year-old Vera, played tennis on a tennis court near by. A nephew of the host, a young Baron Korff, who was going to join Sablin's regiment that year from the Corps of Pages was handing them the balls. Both young girls were beautiful. Supple and well developed by gymnastics and riding Vera served skillfully and her clear, happy voice rang with animation. The officers stood in a group near the players and admired them.

The Cossack officers dismounted, leaving their horses to smart orderlies and crowded behind their Commander towards their host.

Besides the officers there arrived the wife of Colonel Repnin with two daughters, two Barons Wolff with their wives—one was a Wolff of Kourtenhof, who had a coat of arms with a black wolf on a gold field and the other a Wolff of Drosten, who had a gold wolf on a black field,—and a neighbouring landowner Muller with three ruddy fair haired daughters, Elsa, Ida and Clara, awkward-looking young country girls who were confused before the officers. Matzneff swore that they smelled of milk. They wore home-made dresses with tight-fitting black velvet bodices and they reminded the officers of Tirolian singers. Several other German landowners were present, and were introduced by the Baron under a general name—"my friends!"

Although the Baron had been born in Russia and had lived there almost all his life, he could hardly speak Russian. Baron Drevenitz soon joined him and they began to speak German.

The band played a march and the gentlemen, some with ladies on their arms, others alone, walked towards the tables. Either by chance or purposely Princess Repnin introduced Sablin at that moment to Vera and he had to accompany her to the table. His heart jumped when he felt the thin girlish hand on his arm. He looked at the face of the young girl. Her pure eyes were looking at him with sincere admiration and Sablin felt ashamed under that pure gaze.

The Cossack General was the partner of the hostess. He was



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the senior guest, and had long been acquainted with the Baroness.

"What a beautiful pair Vera makes with that young Lieutenant," he said. "Who is he?"

"I don't know," said the Baroness squinting her short-sighted eyes and raising her lorgnette.

"He has been introduced by Princess Repnin. That is a sufficient recommendation."

"Has Vera finished her school?" asked the Cossack General.

"Yes, this year," answered the Baroness.

"Both of them are quite mad. They rush about the woods like boys. But just now she will stay at Petersburg. I should like to introduce her at Court and take her with me to the coronation."

"Ivan Karpovitch," Stepochka Vorobieff's hoarse voice was heard as he addressed the Cossack General across the table,—  
"We are having a discussion here with your Colonel about the 'djigitovka.' Please give us your opinion: has the djigitovka any military importance?"

"Senseless somersaults on a horse," Baron Drevenitz said in broken Russian,—  
"Cossack nonsense. Break arms and feet and spoil horses."

The eyes of the Cossack Commander flashed and he answered in a loud voice.

"Of course! It teaches the Cossack to despise danger and it makes him bold and agile when on horseback."

"What is djigitovka?" Baron Wolff asked.

"Haven't you ever seen it?" said the Cossack General.

"No, I haven't."

"And you haven't seen it, Baroness?"

"No."

"And your nice daughters?"

"Where could they have seen it?"

"Well, then I will show you my men. I will also try to remember my younger days and will djigit before our charming hostess," and the Cossack General gallantly kissed the hand of the Baroness.

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"Platonitch!" he called his Adjutant from the other end of the table.

The Adjutant, a stout man with eye-glasses, a red moustache and partially bald head, approached.

"Send one of the bandsmen to the bivouac and give the order for about twenty of our regimental djigits to gallop up here. And let my orderly lead my 'Explosion' up here."

"Good Heavens," said the Baroness, "are you also going to take part General?"

"And why not, dear lady," said the General,—"please give me your handkerchief. I will place it on the grass and I will pick it up from horseback as a souvenir of a beautiful lady."

And the General, who had become animated, went to collect the handkerchiefs from the ladies and the young girls.

### XXIV

TWENTY COSSACKS rode up and dismounted at the other end of the meadow. A smart red-bearded sergeant, a powerful giant, dashed up to the General and checked his horse before him so that it sat back on its haunches straining forward its front legs.

"I have the honour to report," said the sergeant raising his hand to his cap in salute,—"I have brought the djigits."

"Gentlemen officers!" shouted the General, "to your horses and djigit! Lieutenant Konkoff, take command of the djigits."

A tall slim officer with thick hair curling from under his cap ran up.

"Place the handkerchiefs, Konkoff," the General said kindly,—"I will place this one myself apart from the others. Vera Constantinovna, where is your handkerchief?"

"It isn't easy to pick up such a tiny thing," said the General. "Well, Konkoff,—it is yours, you see that you get it."

"I will do my best, Your Excellency," answered the young officer.

The tables at which coffee had been served were moved aside; the bandsmen and the singers formed a living wall on the other side, and the ladies and the guests prepared to watch. A Cossack orderly ran up to the General leading his bay horse. The

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General tested the saddle girdle, the "shashovka,"\* grasped in Kalmuch fashion the front cantle with his right hand, and lightly jumped into the saddle.

The officers began the djigitovka. The General galloped past first and, notwithstanding his grey hair and noticeable stoutness, lightly bent down at a full gallop, picked up the handkerchief of the hostess with the tips of his fingers and kissed it. A sun-burnt officer jumped off and into his saddle at full speed, Konkoff galloping on a bright sorrel stallion, lightly bent down, picked Vera Constantinovna's handkerchief out of ten others which were scattered on the grass and flourished it over his head.

The Cossacks dashed by in a group standing on their saddles and discharged their rifles into the air. Then they began the djigitovka, one by one.

A young Cossack with a black moustache galloped past on a bay horse. As soon as he approached the spectators he quickly threw his left foot over the front saddle cantle, jumped off, touched the earth with his feet and the next moment was sitting backwards on the neck of his horse. He immediately jumped off on the right side of the horse, jumped back straight into the saddle and repeated that several times.

A second Cossack galloped by head downwards, his shoulders resting on the cushion of the saddle and his legs slightly bent up in the air. A third jumped off his horse, gave a mighty spring from the earth and flew over the saddle, made another spring and flew over the saddle again to the other side of his horse. He seemed to flutter over it without touching leather.

"One must be born to it to do it as they do!" said Prince Repnin.

"Our native steppe trains them in it. It is the favourite sport in our stanitzas and villages," said the Cossack General.—"Destroy the djigitovka and you will destroy the Cossacks!"

One Cossack tried to do something but evidently did not suc-

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\* The "shashovka" is a strap in a Cossack saddle which joins the stirrup straps under the belly of the horse and thus allows the Cossack to bend down and to touch the earth with his hands at full speed.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

ceed. He fell from his horse, turned head over heels and remained motionless on the grass.

The ladies gasped. The officers wanted to run to help him but the General stopped them.

"Stay here," he said,— "he is only shamming. There is a game like that. Another will immediately gallop up, make his horse lie down, and will then carry away the supposed wounded."

But he was mistaken. Several men ran out of the group of Cossack singers and carried away the fallen man.

"Platonitch," said the General,— "find out what is the matter."

The Adjutant ran to the singers and returned immediately.

"Nothing serious," he said loudly,— "he is already mounting his horse."

Taking the General aside he added:—"His leg is badly broken."

The djigitovka was carried on now in groups. Two Cossacks galloped on the same horse facing each other. One was sitting on the neck, the other on the croup behind the saddle and both pretended to play cards. Two others galloped side by side and on their shoulders stood Lieutenant Konkoff. Each group meant a risk of smashing oneself to death should the horse stumble, each necessitated great strength of arms and legs and confidence in the muscles, each was peculiarly beautiful. But now the guests looked on not so much with admiration as with anxiety. They had realized what a risk it meant.

When the last group had cantered past, the Cossack General thanked the djigits and allowed them to return to the bivouac.

"May I have something served for them," said Baron Wolff,—"some beer, vodka and sausages?"

"Please!"—said the General. "Thank you. Only don't give them much vodka. They have to start for the manoeuvres at two o'clock at night."

"Oh, just one glass," said Baron Wolff.

The guests returned to their interrupted coffee and the singers of the Cossack regiment approached the tables. Lubovin, who was with his singers, came nearer. He wanted to watch the

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Cossacks and try to understand them. The Cossacks differed greatly from the soldiers. Their long hair, which showed in becoming locks under their caps gave them a wild unsoldierly appearance. Many were bearded, with broad beards falling in waves. The Cossacks were broader in the shoulders, more powerful looking and freer than the soldiers and were less stiff when talking to the officers. Their faces were more expressive and had a bright keen look.

Lubovin watched the Cossack singers. They had typically Russian faces quite as in pictures representing the Moscow period. "Quite like Moscow boyars, rinds and striltzi-faces of old days as well as their songs. There is no such music nowadays. It would be impossible to accompany it on a violin or a piano, only a shepherd's flute might perhaps follow these variations," thought Lubovin.

The Cossack singers sang a song relating an episode in an inn in Poland where three young troopers, a Prussian, a Pole and a Cossack were drinking together. The Prussian paid in silver, the Pole paid in gold and the Cossack paid nothing.

"Fine!" thought Lubovin,— "Lieutenant Sablin always tells us that a song should have educational value for the soldiers. This is educational!"

The song continued to relate how the Cossack made love to the innkeeper's daughter, how he took her away to the Don, but growing tired of her on the way hung her on a tree in a dark forest. Neither the tune nor the faces of the Cossacks expressed sorrow or indignation at such a crime. Everything was as simple as the song itself.

"Fine morals!" thought Lubovin. He looked at the officers and the ladies. They were gazing at the Cossacks with admiration. Lubovin began to realise vaguely that even in the age of humanitarian ideas a murderer and a smart bandit would always find a place in a feminine heart.

Sablin approached him.

"Lubovin," he told him, "assemble our men. We will sing after the Cossacks."

"That is impossible, Your Honour,"—Lubovin replied bitterly



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—"how would our songs be received after theirs? They would seem rather flat. Only whistling and a lot of noise are wanted here. Excuse me, Your Honour."

Lubovin turned away and left Sablin, who was not angry about it. He understood him. "The pride of an artist," he thought.

The Cossacks sang another song and it was then decided to dance. Esthonian workwomen of the estate had been standing for some time near the meadow. They were dressed in their Sunday-clothes and looked at the soldiers and the Cossacks and the soldiers looked at them.

The band played a waltz and the officers went to invite the ladies. But the young Wolffs refused to dance, fearing to spoil their white shoes and stockings with dew in the grass, which was growing damp in the evening and only the three Mullers began, but seeing that they were alone, also stopped. The meadow grew deserted. The workwomen were shy and the dances were apparently a failure.

"Could we have a 'Polka,' " said the Baron,—“here they dance that chiefly.”

The band played a 'Polka.' The old Baron chose the nicest-looking Esthonian girl in a blue dress with green and yellow ribbons and began to dance with her, to the general amusement. Several workmen followed his example, soldiers and Cossacks, urged by their officers, began to come out and soon the whole meadow was covered with dancers. The bands took turns, playing unceasingly and hundreds of boots beat the measure: one, two, three; one, two, three.

Distant lightnings flashed in the dark sky. The regimental armourer, assisted by soldiers of the baggage-train was finishing setting up fire-works on the edge of the park. A rocket was lighted and flew hissing up into the air, where it burst in a shining star, others of various colour followed it; an artificial fountain threw jets of flame, and the initials of the Emperor appeared, lit by coloured fires.

The dancing quieted down for a moment but immediately began again. The Cossacks and the soldiers became more ani-

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mated after they had had some vodka and beer, the Esthonian girls laughed merrily. Some of the officers drank tea at the tables, others wandered about the park; the young Mullers had gone with Konkoff, the Cossack Adjutant and Fetisoff, and shrieked every time a frog leapt from under their feet.

Barrels of tar flamed on the edges of the meadow where couples were dancing, music was playing and where little shoes and spurred boots beat the merry measure:—one, two, three; one, two, three. . . .

### XXV

LUBOVIN entered a dark pathway in search of solitude.

Someone followed him. He stopped, and Korjikoff appeared dressed in a torn coat put on over a red shirt and carrying a large leather bag with newspapers.

“What are you doing here?” asked Lubovin.

“I am selling newspapers, as you can see. I have decided to do your part of the work, Victor Mihailovitch and to help you, I am going to study the question on the spot.”

“Look out that the ‘blue archangels’\* don’t lay hands on you. Apart from them there are many disgusting creatures around here. Take these Cossacks, for instance. Have you seen them?”

“I have. I am careful, Victor Mihailovitch. Langsam—ruhig. Search me and you will find nothing except the ‘Russky Invalid,’ the ‘Novoie Vremia’ and the ‘Petersburgsky Gazeta.’ I haven’t even got the ‘Birjeffka.’ I am a most well intentioned man, Victor Mihailovitch. I passed the whole of yesterday at Iamburg in the Army infantry. What morals! The officers got drunk and in the night tried to storm with the assistance of the soldiers a villa where some young girls were living. . . . Yes . . . I ran to call assistance. It was a lucky chance that the hussars were not far off and they drove away the infantry. The matter almost ended in a fight!”

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\* Nickname for the gendarmes.

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"But where did you get the documents. I suppose the 'Oh-rana' must have had all your particulars long ago?"

"Of course, I even have a nickname there,—'The red bug,' . . . The party prepared the documents for me. The 'brown overcoats'\* looked at them and never smelt a rat. If you ever need any document . . . we are at your service. The work is done wonderfully. Kamensky's signature is a chef d'oeuvre."

"I envy you, Fedor Fedorovitch. You have grit. Perhaps you still continue to believe in the Russian revolution?"

"I do, but now we must work on the Army."

Lubovin stopped and asked angrily:

"Did you see the djigitovka?"

"I was watching it," Korjikoff said calmly.

"What can you expect when a man breaks his leg for fifty copecks and becomes a cripple perhaps for the rest of his life. I saw him and his comrades. Do you think that they were angry or indignant? Nothing of the kind. His comrades laughed at him: "It's your own fault, Zelenkoff," they said, "why did you jump off sideways, of course it kicked you. That's the horse." And he answered: "I don't know myself why my hand slipped. God punished me." One won't be able to do much with them as long as they hold God and the devil responsible for everything. After that they began to praise their General and the way he picked up the handkerchief. D. . . ! Did you see the shout of their sergeant? Our Ivan Karpovitch seems a cherub beside him."

"You have observed well, Victor Mihailovitch, but you haven't been able to draw correct conclusions."

"What conclusions? In their songs they openly praise highway robbery and murder and at the same time break their legs for the recreation of the gentry. The savages! In their minds God is somewhere overhead, the devil beneath and the Tsar and the gentry dominate everything."

"Well, destroy God. Make the devil your servant and everything will slip down hill as if on sledges."

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\* Nickname for the secret police.

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"I don't know how to start it," said Lubovin sighing.

"You can't manage without an officer. I have made the acquaintance of your Sasha. A good gentleman and handsome."

"When did you do that?"

"I came up to him with a newspaper when you refused to sing and walked away in such rude fashion. A good gentleman. He gave me twenty copecks for the 'Novoie Vremia' and did not ask for the change. I am a good reader of faces and I have looked at him well. He is a pliable fellow. And, Victor Mihailovitch, be angry or not, just as you like, but we can't manage without Maria Mihailovna."

"Fedor Fedorovitch!" Lubovin exclaimed with indignation. "I forgive you your words only because you don't understand yourself what it is that you ask. I have lived for a year in the barracks and I know what all these cigarette sellers and washerwomen are who visit the flats of the officers. And Marousia—understand that well, Fedor Fedorovitch,—will never appear in such a rôle."

"I understand that better than you do," Korjikoff said calmly. "My love for Maria Mihailovna is probably not inferior to yours, but I have other plans and other ways to attain them."

"What are they?"

"Let me think it all over and prepare everything. Let me prepare Maria Mihailovna herself for this doubly dangerous work."

"Why doubly?"

"Suppose that Maria Mihailovna herself should fall in love," Korjikoff said quietly.

"With an officer? Marousia? What nonsense! You must be mad!"

"Let us hope so."

"Only violence could threaten her."

"We won't let that happen."

They were approaching the bivouacs.

"Well, good-bye, Victor Mihailovitch, carry on your work, but be careful. They can't stop their dancing yet, the beggars! But tomorrow we shall have rain."

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### XXVI

THE big manœuvres were to begin by a cavalry encounter. The scouting was to start at two o'clock at night.

Dancing was still proceeding on the meadow near the manor and the servants were serving a late supper for the guests when the Adjutant called Sablin and told him that the Commander of the regiment had given orders to send him with the scouting party, because Lieutenant Fetisoff had drunk too much and was not in a fit state to lead the party. Sablin went to the bivouac, woke his orderly and told him to saddle his horse and bring it with the scouting party to the house of the manager of the estate, which was situated on the main road. Meantime he went with a Cossack officer, who had a lantern, to the Headquarters of the Division to receive his instructions.

After the pleasant evening, the music, the songs, dancing and the sounds of feminine laughter, Sablin was surprised to see the pale, stern faces of the Senior Adjutant of the Divisional Headquarters, a Captain of the General Staff, and a young Army Captain, attached to the Academy, as they bent over a large many-coloured map. They were as serious as if they were dealing with real warfare.

The Cossack officer carefully took notes in his field notebook. Sablin trusted to his memory.

When he came out of the brightly lit room everything seemed so dark on the road that he could not see his horse.

"Here, Your Honour, I am here,"—said his orderly, took his hand and led him up to the horse.

"And the party?"

"Here, Your Honour,"—he heard the deep tones of his section corporal Balatueff.

Sablin was at a loss as to what direction to take. In the room brightly lit by a petroleum lamp he had understood quite well on the map that he had to follow a large road which by a thin purple line cut the green spaces of the woods, that after covering sixteen versts they would reach a glade with a Finnish village called something like Neppelevo or Leppolevo, that more



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woods, another glade, hillocks and a large village Kolosovo would follow, and that they could expect to find enemy scouting parties beyond this village. The first report had to be sent from there. But now in the dark he felt at a loss. The house of the manager was standing in the forest and the main road passed it. But what direction would he have to take? To the right or to the left?

The section corporal brought him out of his indecision.

"To the right, Your Honour," he said and sent out scouts without waiting for the order.

The clatter of the hoofs on the road began to grow faint in the distance when Balatueff respectfully told Sablin: "We can start."

Sablin gave the order and they moved forward.

Nothing could be seen. A thick forest of fir trees stretched out on both sides of the road. The air was filled with the smell of firs, juniper and damp moss. The straight road covered with pools from the rain of the previous day was hardly to be seen ahead. Sablin could not see it at all at first and was surprised at the confident movements of his "Mirabeau."

After half an hour Sablin halted and gave the order to dismount and inspect the saddling and the packs, as it was recommended in the regulations.

"You may smoke," he said, feeling an intense longing for a cigarette.

Matches flashed in red points and for a second lit the motionless horses which looked gigantic in the dark.

Everything was quiet in the forest. Only the water murmured in the ditch and a drop would sometimes fall into it from a branch with a quiet ringing sound.

They mounted again. They should have advanced at an alternately changing gait but Sablin did not risk trotting in the dark and continued to move slowly forward.

The hoofs clattered rhythmically on the road and the night ebbed away. Grey dawn was approaching. One could already see separate trees in the wood and the telephone poles which

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hummed dejectedly on both sides of the road. The fog was rising and clouded the forest.

According to Sablin's calculations of time he ought to be already approaching the glade. It was already quite light. A thin penetrating rain was beginning to patter. The forest ended abruptly and sandy hillocks covered by heather and stumps were seen behind it. Little dark houses appeared through the curtain of rain.

"Your Honour," he heard Balatueff's anxious voice,—“the hussars!”

The troopers were seized by a sudden panic and galloped back down the road. Sablin, following them, looked back. On the right and on the left hussars in white shirts and red caps galloped straight over the stumps with the evident purpose of cutting off their retreat.

Unaccountable, and as Sablin realised later, stupid and unreasonable fright and excitement seized him. He spurred his "Mirabeau" and galloped down the road without glancing backwards. A grey horse's head suddenly appeared on his left, a little thin sunburnt hand powerfully seized his own which was clad in a wet white glove, and checked his horse.

"Don't waste your energy, my friend. We are your superiors in numbers and you're a prisoner," he heard a calm voice say.

A young Lieutenant with a little bushy moustache was galloping at his side on a fine lean horse. Sablin immediately recognised him. It was Lambin, a well-known sportsman and member of the turf.

They stopped. Eighteen smart-looking hussars in wet shirts surrounded Sablin's men and talked to them with animation. Sablin's party in wet, stiff great coats had a confused and far from smart appearance.

"Where were your flanking scouts?" asked Lambin.

Sablin felt a burning shame before his men. Why had he not thought of sending the flanking scouts. Usually they did not do that in their regiment so as not to trample the crops but he did not have that excuse now. The field was covered with sand and heather and yet he had not sent the scouts. Why?

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Because he had never thought of the manœuvre. Manœuvres had meant for him a dinner at Baron Wolff's manor, an acquaintance with a charming young girl Vera Constantinovna, the music of the band, singing, the djigitovka of the Cossacks, dancing, fire-works, but not work in the field and the writing of reports. He had no idea of what work in the military service could mean. Sablin looked at his "Mirabeau." Thick white foam had appeared from under the straps, he breathed heavily and snorted. He was not used to galloping. Lambin's elegant grey horse walked lightly at his side and breathed as if he had just left the stables. He had been trained for manœuvres, for battles and for war. Sablin looked at Lambin. He was approaching a Finnish cottage before which stood a hussar sentry waiting for the returning party.

Lambin called out two of his men and ordered them to wait for the report he would write.

"Corporal Svetozaroff, see that the men get tea and milk. Twenty minutes of rest," he said.

"He is keen on the manœuvres," thought Sablin, "he lives for the interests of his men, probably thinks of the war and prepares them for it. They look exceptionally smart. They seem to know themselves just what they have to do." Sablin's troopers rode in a crowd into the yard and did not know whether to dismount or not. Lambin again gave the orders.

"Dismount!" he shouted to them. "You will stay here till the end of the manœuvre. You can sleep, you must be tired. My boys will give you tea. Your name, Lieutenant?" he addressed Sablin.

He dismounted, patted the neck of his horse and there was something soft and womanly about his movement. The horse understood his caress and watched him like a dog with its dark clever eyes.

Lambin entered the cottage, said several words in Finnish to the peasant and sat down to write a report about the encounter of the scouting parties. Having sent it off, Lambin looked at Sablin seriously.

"Well, Lieutenant, had it been war-time, I would have dis-

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armed you and your men, would have taken away your horses and would have sent you towards the rear under the escort of four hussars. You would thus have been lost to your detachment, but of course we won't do that at the manœuvres. I will leave you here, but you will give me your word that you won't approach your regiment until the end of today's manœuvre and won't enter into any communication with it. Do you give your word?"

"Of course,"—muttered Sablin.

A hussar brought a pot with tea and the owner of the cottage brought out a glass and a brown cup with red flowers painted on it.

"How well everything is organised in your party," Sablin remarked,—“your men seem to be exceptional.”

"The men are the same everywhere," Lambin said seriously, "only their training is different."

"I would very much like to learn how to train good soldiers better."

"You would then have to think less of picnics. Owing to your fire-works we knew the exact place of your bivouac to-night. As a result, we sent only three scouting parties instead of six and could take the right direction. We also know that the encounter of the main cavalry forces will happen here. If you like, we can continue our acquaintance. Visit our regiment and call on me at the fourth squadron. I am always there. But good-bye for the moment."

Lambin hurriedly drank down his cup of tea and went out into the yard. Sablin went to see him off. In the distance ahead he could see the hussar scouts who at a sign from Lambin advanced and entered the forest.

The rain was continuing to fall, the cottage was damp and smelt unpleasantly, water unceasingly trickled down the window panes. An old Finn was sitting in a corner where hung portraits of the Emperor and Empress, a lithographed picture "The Degrees of Human Life" and a portrait of the French president, Faure. He silently sucked at his pipe.

The wet, heavy overcoat was depressing. Sablin took off

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his equipment, put his overcoat on a bench in place of a pillow and lay down.

The Finn sat motionless in his corner and his pipe hissed monotonously. The rain was dully beating against the window panes. Sablin stretched himself, yawned and fell asleep.

### XXVII

"YOUR HONOUR, get up, they're coming!" Balatueff said quietly, entering the cottage on tip-toe. He was still wearing his wet overcoat.

"Who is coming?" asked Sablin.

"The enemy!"

The rhythmic clatter of many hundreds of horses' hoofs was heard outside. Sablin went out. Lancers were passing him at a brisk trot along both sides of the road. Their wet shirts were bespattered with dirt. Birch twigs were stuck behind the badges on their caps, their faces were wet from the rain, the horses had a dark colour. Squadron after squadron passed and behind them could be seen the grey columns and the red caps of the hussars which had grown dark from the rain.

A bugle call was heard in front, several voices shouted in different places and Sablin saw the squadrons leave the road, leap over a ditch and dash forward towards the border of the forest, where the field was covered with the galloping horsemen of the division to which Sablin's own regiment belonged.

Long lines of Cossacks deployed on the left but the dragoons and part of the hussar squadrons dashed against them. A horse battery clattered over the ditch and hastened to occupy a position on the flank. Someone fell; someone's horse, covered with dirt and riderless followed its squadron whinnying anxiously, and the fallen man remained motionless among the stumps. A large field ambulance with a red cross rolled towards him, bouncing over the uneven ground.

The fringes of this panorama were constantly hidden by the rain and Sablin could not discern what had happened in the place where the Cossacks had met the hussars and the dragoons.



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The whole thing resembled a painting and therefore seemed quite unreal to Sablin.

"Can it be like this in real war?" he thought.

"Your Honour," Balatueff interrupted his meditation, "can we start now?"

He assisted Sablin to put on his great coat and Sablin rode towards his regiment, past the Lancers who had attacked Gritzenko's squadron and who had now dismounted.

"Ah, Sasha!" Gritzenko addressed him kindly. He was standing before the squadron with a Captain of the Lancers. "You must be wet, cold and tired. They are going to send us on still further. D . . . them. I've had enough of it and feel awfully hungry. My head is bursting from the Baron's pigwash of yesterday."

"Our canteen man has probably rolled up by this time," said the Lancer. "Let us go and warm ourselves."

"All right," said Gritzenko and went with the Lancer.

Sablin went with them. No one said a word about his having been taken a prisoner and the fact that he had not sent a single report. As if it were all perfectly natural. A glass of starka and sandwiches helped them to forget the manœuvre.

Meanwhile an umpire in a group of regimental Commanders was pointing out that in many squadrons the alignment had been far from perfect and that most of them had attacked without choosing a definite point for the attack. Not a word was said about scouting.

"In your regiment, Baron," a stout Lancer General told Drevenitz, "only one squadron attacked properly. I am glad that the Emperor wasn't present. There was not sufficient spirit about the charge. Some attacked at a trot."

"But the ground was horrible," an officer standing near Drevenitz replied,— "as it is one of my men was killed."

"The ground? . . . Yes, it wasn't good, but, gentlemen, you know the views of the Grand Duke?"

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### XXVIII

THE principal manœuvres of that year had been well conceived and planned. They had a leading idea. They intended to prove the impossibility of the Germans' forcing their way through the marshy passes and taking Petersburg even should they succeed in making a landing. The Commander of the Army Corps which was defending Petersburg and his Chief of Staff had decided to close the passes through the woods, to prevent the Guards from deploying, to place them under the fire of batteries and to let the important German guests who were to be present at the manœuvre see that the Russian Commanders understood their work and that Petersburg could not be taken. By two long and wearisome night marches the Army Corps of the Northern force reached the Kolosovo heights and at day-break was to continue its march so as to close definitely all the approaches to Petersburg. The cavalry was sent sixty versts aside so as to accomplish an enveloping movement and cut the enemy's lines of communication with his fleet which was supposed to be in the Finnish Gulf.

The idea of the manœuvre had been made known to every officer and soldier through clearly written orders and through officers of the General Staff who were sent round the units. All tried to forget weariness and to comply in detail with the orders.

The moment of the decisive encounter was approaching. At ten o'clock in the evening the regimental adjutants of all the units of the northern force were assembled in the little house of a forest guard which was lost deep in the woods. An officer from Headquarters was dictating to them the orders for the battle.

The Commander of the Corps, vigorous in spite of his sixty years was wearily sipping tea in the neighbouring room from a glass which was placed on a large map spread over the table. His Chief of Staff was reading over additional explanations. A dark quiet night was outside. The rain which had been pour-

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ing during the past few days had now stopped, the sky was growing clearer and the stars were coming out.

The bells of two troikas were suddenly heard on the road from the side of the enemy. The clatter of hoofs and the noise of the wheels grew distant. The troikas stopped before the house and a tall stately old man in the cap of the Imperial Suite and a buckskin overcoat entered the room of the Corps Commander. He was accompanied by a tall elegantly dressed General of the General Staff in a black tunic girded with a silver sash. A gendarme corporal in a light-blue tunic followed them. He assisted in removing the overcoat and left the room. The new arrival was the senior umpire and a member of the State Council, an Adjutant General.

"What a wild place you have chosen for your residence, Your Excellency,"—he said, stretching out a large hand in a white glove to the Commander of the Northern Army. "We have found you with difficulty. Could I ask for a glass of tea. . . . Well, what about tomorrow?"

The Chief of Staff took a neat copy of the orders and began to read. The Commander gave explanations on the map. The Adjutant General interrupted them.

"One moment, Your Excellency, have you sent this order to the regiments?"

"It is being dictated and is going to be sent off immediately."

"Stop the dictation. Entirely different orders will have to be drafted."

"But, Your Excellency," said the Commander of the Northern Army rising from his chair.

"What are you trying to do? To close all the passes, to have an action of artillery, to prevent the Guards from coming out of the woods and deploying? You send a division of cavalry aside Heaven knows where, thirty versts along horrible roads."

"Your Excellency,—by such measures we defend Petersburg," put in the Chief of Staff.

"Ah, leave this academical craftiness for other occasions. You forget that the manœuvres are in the Imperial presence. The Imperial train will arrive at nine o'clock at the station

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Voloskovitzi. From there the Emperor and his August guest will ride to the Kolosovo farm where they are to watch the manœuvre from a hill. The Empress will look on from the balcony. Dinner for six hundred persons has been ordered and will be served in the field near the farm. The Cadets will be promoted officers on that field. Do you realise what all this means?"

"What do you want then?" asked the Commander.

"Manœuvres, beautiful attacks of cavalry and of infantry on the Kolosovo field which seems to have been specially created for that purpose."

"Your Excellency, the manœuvre will then lose all its instructive value. Then what was the purpose of making the men tramp through the dirt? The 37th Division had made a march of forty-five versts and already occupies excellent positions. How can I now recall them to Kolosovo?"

"You must do so, Your Excellency," the old man said obstinately. "The men ought to see their beloved Monarch and the Emperor his unequalled Army. You must not forget the principal educational importance of the manœuvres. Give the orders that all must tidy themselves, put on clean shirts and occupy positions so that the Guards can calmly emerge from the forest and deploy for an attack on the field. Concentrate the cavalry behind the forest and make them attack towards ten o'clock."

"That would be a parade and not manœuvres!"

"Manœuvres in Imperial presence," the Adjutant General said with emphasis. "You have yourself served in the Guards and you ought to understand this. You must obey. I give you the order. And believe me," he added with meaning, "that the consequences won't be unpleasant for you."

The Corps Commander sighed heavily. He realized that the Adjutant General was right. It was impossible to have manœuvres in the Imperial presence in such a way that the Emperor could see nothing.

"Write the dispositions," he told his Chief of Staff and began to dictate new orders.

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The Adjutants joined their units on the march towards dawn. The regiments were stopped. The cavalry wheeled round and returned at a trot. When approaching Kolosovo the regiments halted and began to clean themselves and wash off in the river the mud of three days marching. It became evident to all—today they were to see the Emperor.

No one was surprised or indignant. Everyone realized that it was impossible to appear before the Emperor in an untidy state.

Besides, they were all glad to see the Emperor, and rejoiced that the end of the manœuvres had come and that the time of discharge from the service and of returning to their villages was drawing near.

### XXIX

THE morning of the manœuvre was clear and calm. The sun shone quietly from the pale blue autumn sky. Cobwebs of cloud rose and floated in the motionless air. Drops of dew sparkled like diamonds on the leaves of the bushes and on the grass.

Sablin's regiment halted in an alder grove where the soldiers found mushrooms. The whole division was formed in order for attack. Guns often boomed from the direction of the enemy and white smoke rose quietly in thick clouds near the forest. The rattle of the rifles was becoming fiercer and fiercer. One could see long lines of soldiers in white shirts running over the field and lying behind corn stacks. The Division Commander and his Staff stood on an open place on the field. He was excited. He feared to miss the right moment for the attack and was anxious about the gallop over the field which was furrowed by many ditches. It was bad for his heavy form and weak heart. The men had dismounted, some were wiping down the feet of their horses, others leaned on their saddles and meditatively gazed in the direction of the wood where the booming of guns gained in intensity.

Finally the Commander of the Division decided that it was



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time to attack. Orderlies galloped away from him. The men mounted their horses.

Several minutes passed and out of the forest dashed half squadrons spread out in a line, and behind them in close order galloped the half squadrons of the reserve. The gallop over the field and reaped corn pleased the soldiers. A frightened hare dashed from under a corn stack and rushed to the left and to the right almost knocking against the feet of the horses. The infantry, standing with rifles at "order arms" seemed to be coming nearer and nearer. When the cavalry passed it they prepared to dismount, but bugles sounded the "return" from behind. Orderlies dashed up and brought the orders to go back. The charge had been brilliantly performed but the Emperor had not seen it. They were ordered to repeat it when His Majesty had arrived at the farm. Now everyone looked, not at the infantry, which was lying in long lines over the field, but at the hill, on which stood a two-story white house.

The answer of a small unit to a greeting floated down from the hill. The Emperor had greeted the scouts of the Eggersky regiment who held the hill. A multi-coloured retinue now covered the mound. The cavalry attacked again, but without the same animation.

The manœuvres, the scouting, the marches, the bivouacs,—all were now forgotten. The minds of all were concentrated on the same thought,—“the Emperor is here. In a moment we shall see the Emperor.”

The Line Infantry, little, dark, sunburnt men, wearied by the march through the night, now ran down the hill and washed their faces and their boots in the river. They brushed each other and quickly formed into columns. Sablin, who stood opposite, could see that the faces of all wore a happy expression. He also had the same happy feeling and understood them well.

A shrill call was heard near the farm and the buglers and the trumpeters repeated it from every side of the field, in the forest and behind. The firing quieted down. Waves of white gunpowder smoke floated like fog over the reaped fields on which the regiments were now lining up. The infantry bands-

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men ran towards their regiments, their instruments sparkling in the sun. There was something magical in this animated scene as it gradually quieted down. The presence of a Demi-God was felt. The sun shone brightly, the quiet sky was cloudless, the woods were charming in their autumn colouring. Sablin again felt a wave of enchantment sweep over his heart. He felt that the proper surroundings for the magical Tsar had been created by nature and that the simple hearts would not be able to withstand them. It did not matter that the manœuvres had been meaningless, that the Guards had been compelled to win against all reason and that everything had been muddled in the end,—it had all been beautiful. It had again created the proper setting for majesty without which the appearance of the Emperor before his troops was impossible.

The Emperor, accompanied by a large and brilliant suite, was slowly descending the hill towards the field. His guest mounted on a large horse, rode at his side. The Emperor was clad in the uniform of the Preobrajensky regiment\* and wore a silver sash. He rode quietly down the field. The first enthusiastic answer to his greeting was heard and was immediately drowned in cheers and in the music of the National Anthem. Sablin was deeply moved. In the roar of human voices, in the moving tune of the Anthem he saw the whole of Russia with her steppes and forests, mountains covered by white glaciers, blue lakes, little dark villages and churches, touching simple faith—and her great Tsar. He did not know which he loved most—his motherland or its emblem—the Tsar. He would not have believed anyone who told him at that moment that the Tsar was an ordinary being with all the human weaknesses, that he drank vodka, smoked cigarettes and was simply a twenty-five-year-old Colonel. Everything was covered by the mist of his isolation from humanity, all was lit by the rays of the sun and in them he appeared like a Sovereign anointed by God.

Sablin stood in the front ranks. The regiment was formed in a long line and Sablin felt the kind keen eyes of the Emperor

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\* The oldest regiment of the Russian Guard.

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on him. He was rigid from entrancement and saw nothing except those large, grey eyes. The uniform of the Emperor, his horse, everything else vanished in the fascination of his gaze. Sablin knew that his men felt as he did. He understood that by the tones of their answer and by the moving intensity of their cheering. The same thing was repeated as at the parade near the Tsar's Mound—happiness was shed on them from the crowned horseman.

### XXX

DULL days came for the regiment. There was no drill. All the senior officers were on leave. All the posts were filled by youngsters who preferred to do nothing so as not to muddle anything and assured everyone that it was because they were "Caliphs for an hour." A Captain was in temporary command of the regiment and everywhere else there were Lieutenants who appeared for half an hour at their squadron office to hear the sergeants report that everything was going well and to sign requisitions and vouchers.

Only the Quartermaster and the Veterinary were busy. The first was hastily completing, out of regimental funds, repairs on the buildings, the second was curing sick horses and correcting the havoc wrought by the manœuvres. The veterinary hospital was filled from early morning by horses with blistered backs and injured feet. Sprains and wounds were attended to, washed, massaged and the four-legged patients were prepared for new work.

The windows in the barracks were bespattered with paint; the air smelled of oil, varnish, freshly planed wood and lime. The soldiers were dressed in old shirts and trousers which consisted mostly of patches and holes. They climbed about the roofs and the scaffolding, painted, planed wood and completed the various repairs. Others, who were finishing their service that year, took leave and went to the town in parties to get their presents for the village.

The large regimental yard was deserted and covered with grass. The barriers and the hurdles were lying in a corner.

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Rags of some kind were being dried upon them and the sergeant's hens and ducks walked about.

Sablin remained at Petersburg. He was disgusted with the appearance of the yard and of the barracks and kept away. He felt lonely in his flat. Sometimes he spent a whole day lying on a sofa in his study with a book in his hands. He even had dinner brought to him from the Mess. It was so lonesome there in the great halls which echoed his steps, where the mirrors and portraits were still covered in summer fashion by muslin and where the officer of the day alone was present at the table.

Sablin ruminated and balanced the accounts of his achievements during the past year. What had he gained? He knew now how to dress correctly. He knew that one could not wear top boots with a tunic with epaulettes, that it was necessary to be in epaulettes in a theatre box and to bring sweets for the ladies. He learned that clubs could be decent or not and that some of them were considered impossible. He had learned more than that. He knew now that he could love whomever he chose,—but that it had to be kept secret. Kitty could come to Gritzenko's flat and it was possible to kiss her in the presence of the soldier singers and servants but it was scandalous to walk arm-in-arm with her through the Pavlovsk park which the soldiers were forbidden to enter.

He decided to visit Kitty again, but he did not find her at Pavlovsk. At her Petersburg flat he found only Vladia who told him that Kitty had left for the country. She had perhaps married someone there. Vladia laughed in his face. It was strange to see the resemblance between her and Kitty. Sablin felt excited in her presence.

"Come in, I am alone," said Vladia.

The drawing room was full of recollections. Only the hyacinths were replaced by chrysanthemums.

"Well, take off your overcoat," said Vladia.

Sablin obeyed. He afterwards wondered why he had been thinking of Kitty and had yet stayed with Vladia. Everything was very simple this time and Sablin had to acknowledge that it

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was most convenient, did not stain the honour of the regiment and scandalised no one. But he felt even more depressed after that and desired still more strongly to give up the platitudes of life and to find a leading idea for it.

"A leading idea," Sablin repeated in his thoughts, "voila le mot!"

He thought of Lambin and decided to become like him. He would seriously study the military art. He would become more intimate with the soldiers, would learn to understand their souls and would then train them in limitless fidelity to the Emperor. This feeling of love for the Emperor remained unchangingly beautiful in his heart and sacred in his thoughts.

The idea came to him of going to the Academy. This was not the fashion in his regiment. Artillery men, engineers, Army Infantry men went to the Academy. They went because of necessity, but Sablin would go out of conviction, and in order to enlarge the horizon of his knowledge and to become an educated officer.

He got a programme and books and began to look them through. For the entrance examinations he would have to study the history of the world, starting from that of the ancients, and to repeat all the fables about Pericles, Aquilaus and Alcibiades. Then he would have to extract square and cube roots, renew his acquaintance with the tables of logarithms and solve many problems. He would have to guess the names of Russian rivers on a map with no inscriptions, and name towns and districts. All this seemed dull and useless for what he desired to know and he gave up his plans for the Academy. "I will learn from Lambin and from life," thought Sablin. "I will become intimate with the soldiers, study them in the squadron, be friendly with them and make them open their souls to me."

Sablin thought of the respectful corporal Balatueff who always answered everything by: "Yes, Your Honour,"—"No, Your Honour,"—"I don't know, Your Honour." He thought of the soldier Artemoff, who only perspired when he talked to His Honour and torture was reflected on his face.

And Lubovin? Lubovin is a soldier, and he has had some



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education. Lubovin should become the bridge over which Sablin would cross into the hearts of the soldiers and become their friend. They had already spoken about songs and Lubovin had proved to be clever. Sablin had taught him written music and many written songs. With Lubovin's assistance he would now become more closely acquainted with his section, would understand his men and would learn how to influence them. Matzneff would not laugh at his expense any longer when he had become a real officer. He would make new discoveries in this domain which no one had yet studied.

Sablin threw down his book over which he had been meditating, drank his cold tea, jumped up from his sofa and went to the squadron.

### XXXI

THE squadron barracks were deserted. The windows were wide open. The mattresses, blankets and pillows had been carried out into the yard. The bedsteads had a gloomy look with their bare boards. The orderly sergeant reported smartly to Sablin and his words echoed in the empty hall. Twelve soldiers who were washing the floor rose to attention with wet rags in their hands from which dirty water trickled.

"Where is Lubovin?" Sablin asked.

"In the squadron office," answered the orderly.

Sablin passed to the end of the hall and opened a large door which led into a little room. Lubovin was alone. He was toiling over some accounts. He rose rather unwillingly and quietly answered the greeting, swallowing the words "Your Honour." Sablin sat down on Lubovin's warm stool and dismissed the orderly. Alone with Lubovin, he felt ill at ease under the soldier's keen curious gaze.

Lubovin was standing at attention and was apparently bored by the fact.

"Lubovin, I have come to you," Sablin began unexpectedly to himself saying "you," instead of the "thou" usual when addressing soldiers,— "to ask your advice."

An expression of surprise appeared in Lubovin's eyes. He

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stood at ease and folded his hands behind his back. Sablin disliked this, but he said nothing. He had come for a free conversation and formalities would have been out of place here. He would have even made Lubovin sit down, but there was only one stool in the little office.

Lubovin kept silent and this increased Sablin's difficulties.

"Yes," he said, "to ask your advice. You lead the same life as the soldiers of the squadron and you know them well. I am an officer. We shall have to die together."—Sablin said that without knowing why, and felt that the sentence was out of place,—“but we are far apart from each other. The soldiers do not know me and I don't know the soldiers. And we are brothers. We are brothers not only in Christ, as all men are, but we are brothers in our regiment because we have sworn the oath of allegiance under the same sacred colours, and because we serve the same Emperor. I would like you to help me to assume such relations to the soldiers that we should grow near to each other. Like brothers. And so that I may know all that happens in their souls.”

Lubovin regarded Sablin with hostility. The idea came to him that Sablin had simply come to spy and wanted to use him as a tool. But he looked at Sablin's open honest face, at his clear eyes which could not lie, and he realised that Sablin had the best intentions.

"That is impossible, Your Honour," he said.

"But why? When on service, in the ranks, we would have the relations of officers and soldiers and those of comrades at other times."

"That's just what is impossible," Lubovin repeated. "You are a gentleman, a 'barin,' and they are dark, ignorant people. They are afraid of you."

"But they are no longer serfs now and all the people are free," said Sablin:

"You are too different from them. You would have to become equals before you could become comrades, so that you could fully understand the soldier and the soldier could fully

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understand you. Either you would have to descend to the level of the soldiers or they would have to rise to yours."

"I don't understand you, Lubovin," said Sablin.

"I can explain. It all begins with formalities, Your Honour. You come to the squadron, Lieutenant Rotbek gives the order 'attention.' You immediately shake hands with Lieutenant Rotbek and begin to talk of the way you spent the previous evening, of the opera or of some girl acquaintance. And to the soldiers you say 'good morning, boys' and you see to it that the answer is loud and that all their heads are turned towards you. The soldiers feel this. It would be different if you shook hands with them and inquired how they had slept. Then they would feel that there was no barrier between you. But let us take other examples. What conversations do you have with the soldiers?—'Of what government?'—'Of the Viatsky, Your Honour,'—'And of what district?' 'Are your parents alive?' 'What is your trade?' As if you were a coroner or a police officer. The soldiers dislike that. You ought to tell them about your own life."

Lubovin remained silent for a moment and looked at Sablin questioningly. Sablin felt more and more ill at ease.

"But you can't tell them that," said Lubovin quietly, almost in a whisper.

"Why?" Sablin asked more quietly still and felt that his feet seemed to be filled with lead.

"Your life is different from theirs. Apply to it the standard by which you measure soldiers. Would you praise them for such a life? There is one measure for you and another for the soldiers. A soldier also cannot tell you the truth about himself. How could he tell you that he stole twenty copecks at a shop or that he sold his horse's ration of oats to a baker? You wouldn't praise him for that. You wouldn't laugh together over it; you would arrest him and have him court-martialed. And there you are, there is a barrier between you. And you can't avoid it. You cannot tell the truth to a soldier and neither can he tell it to you. The barrier arises as soon as there is no truth between you, and you can't get over it."

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"But suppose I should read to the soldiers," Sablin said meditatively.

"Well, Your Honour, it would be a good thing. The soldiers like that. Only it would be useless. What would you read to them? Lieutenant Fetisoff read 'Taras Boulba' this winter to the soldiers. They listened with real pleasure, but what was the use of it? No use at all. The soldiers listened, and at the same time thought: 'What fables, how well they have been invented.' They are like small children in such matters. Bring them a serious newspaper, read it and explain it to them, that would be quite a different matter. A soldier is interested in his work. And it relates—to the land, if he is a peasant and to capital if he is a workman. He wouldn't listen to you and you wouldn't be able to tell him how to improve his conditions of life. He will listen to men who can teach him this. In their eyes you will always remain a landowner and a capitalist, and a barrier will separate you."

"Then, Lubovin, you put social relations at the basis of everything?"

"Yes, Your Honour. First equality and then brotherhood. What equality have you here? None, even before the law. There is one law for the soldiers and another for the officers. A soldier may hit another on the face—that is all right, but if it happens in your midst, a duel has to be fought! Nothing happens if an officer sleeps too late and doesn't come to drill. A soldier gets arrested for that. Destroy this barrier and the souls of the soldiers will then be opened to you."

"What you say is impossible, Lubovin. . . . I don't know whether you realise it . . . but this is socialism. . . ."

Lubovin remained silent.

"Lubovin," Sablin said, fixing his keen gaze on the eyes of the soldier,—“then, that night on the eve of the parade at Krasnoie Selo, it *was* you who spoke to me. It was thou!” exclaimed Sablin rising.

Lubovin returned his gaze calmly.

"I don't know what you are talking about, Your Honour," he drawled, slowing coming to attention.

Disgusted and uncomfortable, Sablin rose and left the office.

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### XXXII

"WELL, aren't they fine?" Steepochka asked as he inspected for a hundredth time the inner Guard for the Winter Palace which was lined up at the Chief Guard House. The regimental tailor Panteleieff, accompanied by two assistants with brushes, passed down the ranks, bending his grey head and trimming the skirts of the tunics to the same length with a huge pair of scissors.

"Panteleieff! Take off that speck of dust. . . . Not there. . . . On the second from the right flank. . . . Don't you see it? . . . On the shoulder near the strap. So you say they look fine?" Steepochka addressed the orderly adjutant who had come to lead the relief.

"Splendid, Colonel. And do you know what I like best? It is their South-Russian type of beauty. You have a wonderful selection. All have the same little black moustache, the same slightly sunburnt faces. Last week the Chevalier Guards sent Baron Morenheim here in command of a guard. You must know him, a tall, clean-shaven ruddy fellow; and all his men were like him. All were fair-haired giants. But you know, I didn't like them. There was something un-Russian about them. They reminded me either of Germans or Finns. But your fellows are typically Russian in spite of their uniform. They are just splendid. Your officer also is extremely handsome."

"Yes, he is!"

Stepepochka once more inspected the Guard with the air of an artist who had finished a painting, sighed and asked: "Is it time?"

The orderly adjutant looked at his watch and answered:

"No, we have another minute and a half. The Commandant will be present at the relief and perhaps the Grand Duke. Yesterday the Cossack Commander of the guard was sent for three days to the guard-house. He was leading his men past the palace on the Nevsky and on the left flank one of the Cossacks was out of step. It's so hard with these men."

"They don't understand beauty."

"One has to be born in its surroundings, Colonel."



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The orderly adjutant looked at his watch and said solemnly: "Lead them."

Stepochka sighed once more. He was loath to be separated from the men whom he had so lovingly selected from the whole regiment, whom he had trained for the palace guard service and whom he had just seen clad in new tunics specially cut for the occasion.

"Lead them, Lieutenant Sablin," he said in a tired voice.

According to the regulations Sablin came out before the guard and commanded in an even voice:

"Guard! Draw sabres! Right face! Forward march!"

Stepochka made the sign of the cross over the guard and gazed with loving admiration at each soldier as he passed. The high shining top-boots creaked, the spurs clanked and the guard moved with drawn sabres at "carry," rhythmically swinging their arms. They passed the group of infantry soldiers of the outer guard, their own tunics and great-coats, in which they had come and which now lay in a heap on the floor, went up a narrow staircase, and there extended. The right flank slowed down as they entered a gallery with many battle pictures hanging on its walls; the men took the right distance and entered the great Nicolaieffsky hall with a rhythmic creaking of their boots, trying to step on tip-toe. The guard of the Chevalier Guards was already lined up, and a young officer gave the order:—"Draw sabres!"

Sablin wheeled his guard. Count Adlerberg, the Commandant, a specialist on such matters, and the Grand Duke stood near the doors and watched the proceedings. Sablin felt nervous. Everything was simple, simpler than any figure of the quadrille and yet he feared that something would go wrong. The two guards were lined up opposite each other. Sablin's men seemed to have been taken from a painting.

The men presented arms and remained motionless. Only the yellow-red sabre knots swung quietly under the white gloved fists. Sablin raised his sabre to his chin and walked out before the centre of his guard. The little Chevalier Guard officer came

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out to meet him. They halted before each other and lowered their swords to their feet.

"Lieutenant Sablin, Parole Warsaw," Sablin said in a half whisper.

"Lieutenant Shostak," the other replied as quietly.

Simultaneously they raised their swords to their chins, turned round, softly clanking their spurs, and returned to their guards. They were performing it all with a feeling of religious sanctity. The shining inlaid floor, the portrait of the Emperor Nicholas I on horseback, painted so that wherever the onlooker might stand in the hall, it would always seem that the Emperor galloped and looked straight at him, the great space of the hall, the bronze chandeliers with crystal hangings,—all this created an unusual magical atmosphere. The men of the guard seemed especially important in their duty of defending the Emperor's sacred person.

Sablin's men relieved the Chevalier Guards, who left the hall. Double sentries stood at the doors. The Grand Duke and the Commandant left the hall content with what they had seen. The soldiers sat down in special oak arm chairs which were extremely uncomfortable. They sat like statues, their helmets dully shining in the shadows thrown by the wall. A footman in a red coat bordered by a gold braid with black eagles brought a large red arm chair with gold legs and arms, and a small table which he covered with a clean cloth and told Sablin in a respectful whisper: "I will serve lunch at once."

Sablin did not want to eat. The presence of his men was embarrassing. They sat behind and watched attentively what was being served and what their officer ate at the Emperor's palace. Red wine was brought in a crystal decanter, but Sablin did not touch it. He was ashamed to do so before his men. He ate a soup, "creme d'asperge," cutlets "de volaille" partly wrapped in frilled papers, and a sweet rice cake. A bowl with an apple, a pear and grapes was placed before him.

Again he felt the difference between himself and his soldiers. Involuntarily he thought of his conversation with Lubovin in the autumn after the manœuvres and felt that he could never

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enter on friendly, brotherly relations with his men. He was a guest of the Emperor and the Emperor had dishes served to him from his own table. They were servants, hirelings. For them not dinner, but "hot food" was brought from the regiment in a cauldron wrapped in cloth. They went by turns to eat it at the Chief Guard House.

Everything was quiet in the hall. Footmen sat dozing near the doors and sentries stood motionless. Cold came from the Neva, frozen and covered by snow. The clatter of horses' hoofs could be heard on the wooden pavement outside. The capital was leading its usual life, but here life had been frozen long ago, and the hall seemed filled with phantoms of the past.

Sablin could not leave his guard. A trumpeter had to follow him wherever he went. He was guarding the Emperor. He knew that the Imperial lodging, called "The Inner Apartments" was behind the hall where the Cossacks were standing, that then came a corridor with large doors before which stood the infantry and the Cossack sentries; farther on sat men of the palace police, and the Cossacks of the Emperor's bodyguard quietly walked to and fro in their soft top-boots without heels. The huge palace was full of men standing at their posts but at the same time it seemed to be gloomily deserted. A hall could be seen through the doors, a second hall behind it and another farther on. Footmen were seen everywhere near the doors, double sentries in some places, but no one who lived in the palace. One felt awe in the silence of the dead walls which was broken only by stealthy footsteps or by a frightened cough. A messenger would pass swiftly by, but he did not resemble a human being. A round hat with white, yellow and black ostrich feathers, a black coat embroidered with gold lace, tightly fitting white knee-breeches, long stockings and black shoes made him look more like a phantom of the past or a servant from a fairy tale.

It was four o'clock, but gloom was already gathering in the high corners of the white and gold marble hall, the walls of which were covered with silver and gold plate. Each was a model of embossing and engraving art, each had its own story

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of love and devotion to the Monarch. Towns and governments, zemstvos and peasants, nobles and merchants presented "bread and salt" to their Emperor on these plates. Whole pictures of towns, emblems and scenes were skillfully engraved or embossed upon them. . . .

They were dully shining in the twilight and were suddenly drowned in it. Electric lamps were lit in some parts of the hall and in the central chandelier, but they did not dispel the gloom. The great hall became cold and uncomfortable.

A petroleum lamp with a blue shade was placed on Sablin's table. Dinner was served. . . . The day was fading away. Night was approaching the silent palace. . . .

### XXXIII

THE night was full of phantoms. Sablin remembered an old officer who had told him how the ghost of the Empress Elisabeth appeared in the palace some time before the death of one of the Emperors. She came out of the doors of the closed part of the palace and quietly and majestically crossed the hall. She was seen so clearly, it was so evident that it was the Empress who was coming that the officer of the guard lined up his men and presented arms. The Empress passed them, looked attentively at the sentries who were shivering from fright and bowed her head to the officer. That incident was entered in the history of the regiment to which the guard belonged. All the men of the guard swore to the fact that they had seen the Empress, who had died long ago.

What was there surprising about it? It would have been more surprising if such things did not happen here in the palace, where everything was so unlike ordinary life. Here lived the Monarchs, and from this place Russia was governed!

Here died the Empress Catherine II who had corresponded with Voltaire, who had entertained here all the great men of her epoch, the legendary Tsaritza sung by Derjavin. Here men had worn powdered wigs, and the rough nobles of the Russian steppes had received French polish. Here the insane Emperor Paul united the coffins of the Emperor Peter III and of Cath-

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erine II and the two hostile dead met before the eyes of numerous subjects. Here Paul arrived with Araktcheeff from Gatchino and began to introduce his innovations. Here Alexander I the mystic, wrote his letters to Napoleon, and Nicolas I called Rileieff and sent him hence to the gallows. Here the Tsar-Martyr died with broken legs in a pool of blood, having paid with his life for giving freedom to millions of serfs. . . .

Blood . . . blood . . . blood was everywhere. Blood of terrible wars declared here, the blood of scaffolds and gallows, of death warrants issued from this place.

Sablin sat in his arm chair but he could not doze. He felt awed. Here the explosion had occurred which had transformed the whole guard of the Finliandsky regiment into a heap of corpses and groaning, mutilated men, bleeding and covered with fragments of stones and bricks.

Every minute, every hour, danger threatened the Emperor. Why? Only because he was an Emperor. Only because he had the misfortune to be born of crowned parents, and of accepting the burden of power. Hundreds of men were hunting him, secret societies were formed to destroy him.

How terrible!

There, behind these mahogany doors, inlaid with bronze the Emperor and the young Empress quietly sleep in a richly furnished bedroom. How cold and awed she must feel in this foreign country with foreign people and language.

Sablin thought of her, tall, cold, with golden hair, beautiful with her soft cheeks and large grey eyes.

Is she asleep now in this strange palace, surrounded by the intense cold of the Northern winter? What is she thinking of, if she is not sleeping? Is she worried by terrible phantoms and thoughts of constant danger, of the untiring pursuit of wild, strange people? Or has she forgotten this and is she sleeping soundly not thinking of this strange, new life?

What if the palace should suddenly be filled with noise and shouts, running men, and sentries' shots, and a terrible fight for the Emperor should begin here?



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He, Sablin, would know how to die for the Emperor, he would consider it happiness for himself. And would they?

Sablin rose and walked past his men.

They sat like statues and dozed, their hands in white gloves resting on their knees. He wanted to ask them and did not know how to do it, nor whether they would understand him.

He approached a big window. The Neva was deserted. The moon shone from a sky of brocade. The spire of the Petro-pavlovsk cathedral and the Angel which crowned it sparkled under its rays. The wind blew the snow in a thin mist over the surface of the Neva and it seemed as if it were the shadows of the past speeding from the fortress to the palace. How queer was the idea of placing side by side the sepulchres of the Tsars and the prison for state criminals.

Did the embalmed Monarchs who slept there hear the volleys which ended the lives of victims and the last whispers of the men who were led to the gallows? Did they hear the rolling of drums?

The clock bells rang on the cathedral. The Empress must hear them in her bedroom and what a heavy impression their sad sounds must make on her solitary soul.

Shades left the Ioannovsky gates and sped towards the palace. Ghosts of the Emperors hurried thither pursued by the shades of those who had given their lives to destroy them—the poet Rileieff, the traitor officers Pestel and Muravieff-Jeljaboff, Risakoff and hundreds of others. Could his guard resist the onslaught of the phantoms?

The Neva was deserted. Not a single izvostchik or passer-by could be seen. A group of strangely dressed people who seemed to be returning from a masquerade were moving across the snow. A tall man in a three-cornered hat, high top boots and with a heavy stick in his hand walked at their head, ladies in powdered wigs followed him. Further on came men in tunics with high collars embroidered with gold. Four footmen in red coats were carrying a handsome general with grey side whiskers. All the faces were pale. When they came nearer and began to ascend the granite steps leading to the quay, Sablin saw that

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the eyes of all were closed. They entered the palace and he heard the sound of their hurrying footsteps approaching the doors of the Nicolaieffsky hall. He was seized with excitement. He wanted to shout an order to his men but could not. His whole body seemed to be filled with lead. But the multitude of Tsars and Tsaritzas was already rushing into the hall. The doors cracked loudly, swung open and . . . Sablin awoke.

He had been sitting on a chair near the window, sleeping in a most uncomfortable attitude. One of the soldiers' helmets had fallen and the noise had wakened his officer. Twilight reigned in the hall, several electric lights burned dimly in the corners of the ceiling and in the chandeliers, the men of the guard sat motionless and sighed heavily, a smothered cough was heard in the next hall. Sablin looked out of the window. The moon was still in the same place. The spire of the Petropavlovsky cathedral shone dimly. The wind blew the snow into mist over the Neva. A light burned in a distant window in a tall house on the other side of the Neva.

A man passed once or twice up and down the quay peeping into the windows and looking 'round anxiously. In spite of the cold he was dressed in an open coat under which a dark shirt could be seen and wore a soft black hat. A large Finnish knife hung from his belt and two revolvers were stuck behind it. The man resolutely approached the window where Sablin was standing, threw off his coat and quickly climbed up the water pipe with the agility of a monkey, catching at the projections of the ornaments on the walls. Sablin stood perfectly still and waited. A strange feeling of numbness overpowered him. The man climbed up to the window and his eyes rose to the level of Sablin's face. He looked at Sablin with hatred and said something. Sablin did not move. The man took a diamond glass cutter from his pocket and began to cut the glass, carefully pressing it with his fingers and keeping his fiery eyes fixed on Sablin. Only the pane of glass separated them. Suddenly he staggered, lost his balance, waved his hand with the diamond and plunged downwards. Sablin heard the dull thud of his body on the granite slabs of the side walk, and awoke. He real-

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ized that his dream had been continued and that he had not wakened the first time but had only dreamed it.

His head was heavy. He was sitting in an arm chair near the window. Dawn was breaking. Two Cossacks, their heads wrapped in "bashliks" rode past and the hoofs of their horses thudded dully on the snow covered wooden pavement. The palace was guarded from all sides. The Cossacks were verifying the infantry posts. A quiet rustle was heard in the corridor near the doors of the Emperor's apartments. Sentries were being relieved there. Cossacks stood there, infantry and the police. All watched each other.

Sablin felt anxious. Anxious for the Emperor who was guarded so carefully, who could trust no one and who never knew who would betray him and when.

### XXXIV

It was quite light outside. Dvorniks in grey coats of a uniform Russian pattern were scraping the sidewalks and collecting the snow into heaps. The frost was bitter. Steam rose from the bodies of the workmen and their faces were red. Sledges came to carry away the snow. White streamlets of steam blew out of the horses' nostrils as they breathed. It was cold in the hall. The sentries were shivering at their posts near the doors, Sablin's hands were numb. The lamps had gone out, white light penetrated the hall, lighting up the dishes and the inlaid floor and making them shine.

The hall was suddenly filled with men in red shirts and blue trousers. They began to polish the floor. Could Sablin guarantee that the man with the pale face and grey eyes burning with hatred whom he had seen in his dream was not there among them?

The men were silently doing their work. They passed in a line over the hall and disappeared.

Two messengers passed. One was carrying a red hot pan and the second was pouring aromatic vinegar over it. The vinegar hissed, rose in vapour and a sweet fragrance was noticed in the air. The same contrivance had been used in the

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days of Alexander, Nicolas, Alexander the Blessed, Paul, Catherine . . . maybe the same method of perfuming had been used in the palaces of the Tsars of Moscow.

The hall was waking up. Tea was served to Sablin. Four simply dressed men preceded by a footman carried past great baskets of blossoming hyacinths. The footman looked at Sablin and said in an important whisper: "To the apartments of Her Majesty."

Sablin would have liked to follow these men and to penetrate to the bedroom where she, whom he revered, had rested. Was it like the bedroom of an ordinary woman?

Sablin dismissed these thoughts as sinful and incompatible with the sanctity of the surroundings.

At five minutes to eleven an old footman in a red coat almost ran through the hall and told Sablin in a respectfully frightened whisper: "His Majesty the Emperor!"

Sablin's heart beat faster from excitement like that which he had experienced at the parade.

The distinct answer to a greeting of the Cossack guard was heard two halls away.

The Emperor came out from under the arch near the portrait. He was dressed in a long infantry tunic with a sword at his side, broad trousers and top-boots. A cap, set slightly on one side, was on his head. He was going out for a walk alone.

Sablin gave the order "present sabres" in an uneven, excited voice to his guard, which was already lined up. Simultaneously he lowered his sword and stood in frozen immobility. "If the Emperor stops," thought Sablin, "I must immediately report." And he repeated in his mind the words of the formula: "In the guard and on the posts of Your Imperial Majesty from. . ."

But the Emperor did not stop. He looked kindly at Sablin and said as he passed the men: "Good morning, guard. . . ." The men answered in restrained voices, as they had been taught to answer at the palace. The echo of their voices had not yet died out as the Emperor disappeared behind the doors leading to the Malachite hall.

The fact that the Emperor was going for a walk dressed in a

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simple tunic and alone seemed somehow commonplace and unfitting for His Majesty, but there was also something touching in seeing him. It would have been so dreary to remember afterwards the strain of the guard and the night full of shadows and phantoms had he not passed. It was now all lost in the recollection of those kind, grey eyes and of the calm even voice.

The relief arrived at noon. Sablin again acted as if he were performing a religious rite, but now no one watched the proceedings except the orderly adjutant. The Grand Duke was absent from the palace and the Commandant was at the relief of the infantry guard. A stout Chevalier Guards Captain was carelessly giving the orders. He swallowed his name when presenting himself and for some time he could not remember the parole.

"The parole," he was saying, "the parole, ah, hang it. . . . I had a note of it somewhere. . . . The parole—Helsingfors."

All the solemnity was lost because of this, the colours faded away and everything seemed ordinary and not nearly so important.

At one o'clock the men were once more dressed in their old clothing and were returning to their barracks with Sablin. They were hungry and hastened to their dinner. The sun shone but the cold was intense. The snow creaked under the feet of the soldiers and the spurs clanked to the rhythm of their step.

Of all the splendour and the phantoms of the great hall, and of keeping the guard near the apartments of the Tsar there remained only a great desire to throw off one's helmet, to take off the tight fitting tunic, to throw oneself on a bed and to sleep, sleep!

## XXXV

ABOUT a fortnight after the day when Sablin had been on guard, he received a letter from Mrs. Martoff. She reminded him that she had been a friend of his late mother, informed him that young people were accustomed to gather at her house, that they intended to stage an opera and that she, knowing the musical talents of Monsieur Sablin, invited him to participate in it and



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to come at eight o'clock sharp on Thursday to talk over the details.

Sablin was not surprised by this letter. That winter he had often received similar invitations. An excellent dancer, a society man who knew how to entertain, of good family, rich, handsome,—he was always a desired guest wherever young girls and young men met who danced and played at “*petits jeux*.”

He showed the letter to the officers of his squadron. It appeared that Mrs. Martoff was the widow of a General and that Gritzenko and Matzneff knew her.

“You will be bored to death,” said Gritzenko, “there won’t be any opera there. I believe she’s writing it herself but hasn’t yet ventured to reveal it to the world. You will only hear plenty of chatter, get mint cakes, nuts, ‘*pastilla*’ and marmelade. She always has a crowd of guests, mostly youngsters, the kind that take whole handfuls on their plates. You will be disappointed if you hoped to have supper there, and can consider yourself lucky if you get a slice of ham. It will be frightfully dull, and just one endless lot of chatter.”

Matzneff had a different opinion.

“Go, Sasha, you will become acquainted there with our democrats and ‘*intelligentzia*,’—Matzneff underlined the last word with open contempt.—Ekaterina Alexeievna has a passion for assembling home-made Robespierres and Marats at her house and listening to their talk. But sometimes you meet a most beautiful Charlotte Corday there. It is nice once in a while to pass a little time among these turbulent youths with their green speeches, yellow beaks and their yelping about freedom. It does you good.”

“Will you be there, Ivan Sergeievitch?”

“No, I never go there now.”

“He got kicked out,” laughed Gritzenko,—“for preaching Anacreon. It isn’t the fashion there. Their heroes are the *moujiks*, Leo Tolstoi and the latest is Chekhoff. . . . You will hear them condemn Pushkin and bring him down to the level of Lomonosoff as a poet of bygone days. But I would go, if

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I were you. Only follow my advice: drink some vodka at home before starting. They are all tee-totalers there. . . .”

An hour later according to Petersburg fashion, at nine o'clock Sablin drove up to a large house in the Nicolaieffsky street and went up to the third story. A small coat rack was covered with overcoats padded with wadding or lined with cheap fur, and by students' and schoolboys' uniform overcoats and caps. The sounds of many young voices came from the flat. A maid-servant led Sablin to the dining room through a simply furnished drawing room lit by petroleum lamps where stood a piano and music stands for violinists. About twenty guests sat 'round a large table. Mrs. Martoff, a stout, good-natured, grey-haired lady, was sitting behind a huge samovar. Sablin introduced himself. He had called before but had not found her at home. All were silent when Sablin entered in his well-cut tunic, fresh looking and scented.

“Don't shake hands,” said Martova, “it isn't the custom here. You will only cause a great rumbling of chairs. You will gradually become acquainted during the conversation, it isn't necessary to introduce you. All are our good friends here: Sasha, Grisha, Kostia, Valia, Lena, I simply couldn't call them otherwise than by their pet names. They have grown up before my eyes. This is my daughter—Varia.”

Martova nodded in the direction of a young girl of about twenty, simply dressed, with neatly arranged hair and a round good-natured face. It looked rounder still because of large spectacles which rested on her little nose and covered short-sighted eyes.

Varia slightly nodded her head and held out to Sablin her large moist hand.

“We are very glad that you have come,” she said. “It shows that you are not a proud and empty aristocrat. This,”—she pointed to a brunette who was sitting at her side, “is my best friend, Marousia Lubovina.”

Sablin saw a beautiful face in a frame of dark auburn hair with blue admiring eyes. He did not pay much attention to her at first. There were too many people around who all began to

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talk with noisy, youthful impetuosity and ardour. Some one moved a chair towards him, some one else made room for him and Sablin found himself in the centre of a large table among many young men and girls. A steaming glass of tea with lemon and a slice of thickly-buttered Swedish bread were placed before him.

"Well," he heard a clear voice,—at last we see in our midst a representative of power and oppression and we can now discuss the question of what our future army should be like."

"One moment, comrade,—I think that there must not be any army at all,"—some one interrupted him from the other end of the table.

Sablin looked at the speakers.

The first was a student dressed with intentional carelessness in a blue Russian shirt with an embroidered collar, over which he wore an old black student uniform tunic with brass buttons. His opponent was a thin, pale schoolboy with a young curly beard most of which grew near his neck. He was dressed in a blue schoolboy uniform tunic with white buttons, the plating of which was so worn off that most of them appeared like brass-red spots.

"How can you say that there must not be any army," exclaimed quite a young, long-haired schoolboy with red cheeks, hazel eyes and long eyelashes. He was dressed in a clean new black tunic and seemed to be the youngest of all present. Ever since Sablin had entered, he had kept his admiring gaze fixed on his uniform. "The Germans will come and conquer us then!"

"What nonsense!" exclaimed a technology student in an old, tightly buttoned tunic,—“a war of conquest on the threshold of the twentieth century! That is impossible!"

"And why?"

"The people won't agree to fight. They have realised what war means and wars have now become impossible," the student said in a tone of conviction.

"All right! An order will be given and we'll have war," said

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the schoolboy, stuffing such a huge piece of bread into his mouth that Sablin wondered why he didn't choke.

"Why should everyone arm themselves then," said another schoolboy, pale and unhealthy looking. "Armed peace is costing Europe too much and Europe is on the eve of bankruptcy."

"Comrades!" Varia Martova said in an imploring tone,—“we are all out of order again. We're all talking at once and everybody is expressing his opinion without listening to the others. We have all decided to invite a representative of the army here so as to put him some questions concerning his speciality. We wanted to listen to the opinion of a specialist and to judge of the whole afterwards. Let us begin then.”

"Are wars possible now?" A schoolboy put the question.

"No, No," a student dressed in a well-cut tunic with gold embroidery on the collar shouted from a corner of the table. He had a little moustache and wore a pince-nez. "I insist on my way of formulating the question: Is the army created for war, or are wars created for the army?"

"Comrades," Varia shouted over the voices of the rest,—“please wait for your turn to put the questions, Monsieur Sablin. . . .”

"Why do you call him 'monsieur' . . ." growled the grim looking technology student.

"Should ranks exist?" asked a small middle-aged girl with a thin, bird-like nose and angry eyes.

"They are ridiculous!"

"And useless."

"Gresha, stop this!" Varia shouted at the top of her voice. Comrade Pavel Ivanovitch, you will state your opinion later. Monsieur Sablin, tell us why the army exists and what is its purpose. We ought to formulate our questions and answers exactly."

"The defense of the throne and of the motherland is the duty of a soldier and of the army," Sablin quoted the words of the regulations.

A terrific noise was raised all around.

"One moment," a student shouted from the other end of

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the table,—“the defense? But from whom? It is necessary to have some one attacking, so as to defend, but defense isn’t needed at all if no one attacks. This is as clear as day.”

“Comrade Pavel,” Varia Martova addressed him,—“just wait a moment. We will put the question: defense from whom?”

“From foes from within and from without,” Sablin answered, again in the words of the regulations. He was taken aback by the rapid cross questioning and exchange of opinions. For the first time these questions—so clear, simple and evident, were put to him by people who did not consider the answers either clear, simple, or evident.

### XXXVI

SABLIN looked round the society. He had already divided it in his mind into people who for some reason or other were sympathising with him and people who were irreconcilable, who had begun to hate him from the very moment that they saw his uniform. He understood that he would not succeed in changing the opinion of the latter.

The daughter of the hostess belonged to the first group. She seemed to be an embodiment of non-resistance to evil and had taken his side only because she saw that the majority had attacked him and that he was not prepared for the defense. Marousia Lubovina, who had not yet said a word, was apparently also on his side. Such a beautiful girl certainly had to be kind. Harmony demanded that. Beauty was attracted by beauty and Sablin knew that he was handsome. He had accepted the challenge because of her presence. He had been feeling the gaze of Marousia’s dark blue eyes fixed on him and wanted to show her that he was clever. He felt that although she kept silent, she nevertheless urged on the young people by her gaze and that they engaged in a tournament of opinions for her sake.

Several persons displayed no interest in the proceedings. Three young girls were sitting together, whispering, and their thoughts were apparently very far from the topic of the discussion. Here, as everywhere in Russia, the young girls were



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all sitting at the end of the table which was nearer to the samovar and to the hostess, while the young men were crowded at the other. Most of them smoked without having asked the permission of the hostess.

The talk went on and on, and Sablin with Lubovina's eyes upon him did his share.

"Well, children, enough of this," said the hostess at last. "Come and sing now."

All rose and left the table. No one except Sablin approached the hostess to thank her. Sablin wanted to kiss her hand but she pulled it away and did not let him do so. It was not the fashion here.

A student made a megaphone with his hands and shouted in a wild voice as he would have done from the top gallery of a theatre: "Lubovina-a! Lubovina-a-a!" It appeared she was the singer.

### XXXVII

SABLIN approached her when she finished her song. She was standing near the piano quite pale from excitement. The fingers of her hands with which she held the edge of the black piano board seemed quite white. The young girl who had been accompanying her continued to play a melody.

"What talent you have," said Sablin. Marousia raised her deep sapphire blue eyes and looked at him.

"You think so? . . ." she said and blushed.

"With such a voice and such features you ought to go on the stage. You will conquer the whole of Europe and the whole world will be at your feet."

"Oh,—Please don't—," she said.

"Are you at the conservatoire?"

"No, my father wants me to become a learned woman. I am studying mathematics."

"No! You and logarithms? You and integrals and differentials? This can't be!"

"And why not?"

She looked at him more boldly. She saw brains and a strong

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will reflected in his eyes. A light sparkled in the depths of her dark pupils and Sablin understood its meaning. "We shall fight," that light told him, "and we shall see who will be the winner." A warm current ran through his veins and his slim figure became slimmer still.

"Why did you choose such sad songs? Is there only sorrow on the earth?"

"Much sorrow, a great deal of it," said Marousia and tightened her lips so that her face took an older and sadder expression. Her animation disappeared. "Her power of expression is wonderful," thought Sablin,—*"she must be an artist but is concealing the fact."*

"But much happiness too," he said, excited at the thought of being acquainted with a rising star of the theatrical world.

"Happiness for some; but sorrow for others," said Marousia. "If you only knew the awful poverty of the Russian peasants. They have little to eat, their *'izbas'*\* are cold and empty. . . . The children cry. . . . O—oh!" Marousia shuddered and covered her face with her hands. "How can one be rich! I would have given everything away to the poor if I only had means. . . ."

"According to Scripture?"

"No, according to my sense of duty. What importance has Scripture! People have known it for almost twenty centuries but has the world become better for that? A different teaching is needed, stronger and more powerful."

The gaze of her clear eyes seemed to penetrate Sablin's very soul.

Who was she, after all?

## XXXVIII

PERHAPS SABLIN would have forgotten Marousia among the pleasures of the Petersburg winter season, perhaps he would not have gone to the regular Thursdays at the Martoff's house with

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\* *"Izba"* is the Russian name for a peasant's cottage.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

their discussions of callow youngsters and Marousia's singing, had she not reminded him of her existence.

He was, of course, ignorant of the fact that Marousia wrote to him at Korjikoff's request and partially under his dictation, and therefore the letter touched and surprised him. "What a nice girl she is," he thought. "Probably she belongs to our circle of society. She must be the daughter of a general or at least an officer. She loves the army, she sees the defects of our life and she suffers from them!"

Marousia wrote him her thoughts about the army, the state and the people on eight sheets of good linen paper.

"Most honoured Alexander Nicolaievitch," she began her letter,—“excuse me for troubling you with my thoughts and questions on so short an acquaintance. Last week during the discussion at the home of Ekaterina Alexeievna I felt with pain that all the people were divided into two worlds which misunderstood each other and which, I fear, mutually hate each other. I felt afraid. Afraid, not for Russia, but for the whole world, because this is not a merely Russian phenomenon but a world wide one. The world has out-grown feudalism, the lower classes have freed themselves from the tutelage of the upper classes and want to live.

"You asked me why I chose such songs and why my voice was so full of sadness? I will answer your question now. You have to be waked up, you who stand at the top of the ladder. I certainly do not mean you personally, Alexander Nicolaievitch, I don't even know you yet. I am ready, I would like to believe that you are different from the rest, I would like to grow to care for you; but your circle of society, the ruling class, does not see and does not want to see what happens beneath them. You spoke with animation that night about the valour of the military service, you spoke of the honour of being a soldier and a defender of the motherland. Do you yourself believe in what you said? Because how can one reconcile your words with a notice which I by chance read yesterday at the entrance to the Tavrichesky gardens: 'Entrance forbidden to privates and dogs.' How can you place soldiers on the same level with dogs if the

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name 'soldier' is an honorable one? How can one do such a thing? And isn't it your duty to express your indignation about it?

"I have many, many questions. They will be put to you next Thursday and I should very much like you to answer them well."

It was the first time that Sablin had ever received a letter of this kind. Marousia raised questions which he had passed over. He wanted to reply and to justify himself, the army and the Emperor. Sablin felt that the accusations also touched the Emperor because he was the source of everything. Sablin visited Lambin with Marousia's letter and together they went to see Lieutenant Dalgren, a friend of Lambin who was finishing the Academy. As a result Sablin was prepared to give the answers and had much historical material and many quotations at his disposal.

He was met in a friendly manner and as an old acquaintance at the Martoffs. They all seemed to have grown used to him. The long-haired schoolboy dogged his movements trying to render him services, Marousia firmly pressed his hand in comradely fashion when they shook hands, comrade Pavel looked at him through his spectacles and said condescendingly: "Let's listen to the army."

Sablin was listened to attentively. He spoke well and although everyone attacked him again after his speech and he realized that he had convinced no one, he nevertheless felt himself to be the centre of the group and noticed that he had produced a certain impression. Marousia thanked him and looked at him with an air which seemed to say: "We are accomplices."

After that Thursday Marousia and Sablin began to exchange letters. The topics discussed in the correspondence were serious ones. Sablin was compelled to read many books on political economy, socialism and on the labour question. It developed Sablin mentally and his letters began to interest Marousia. At first she had not thought much of him.

"A handsome 'barin,'" "a little cherub," was the way she classified him. She thought him empty, stupid and uneducated.

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She simplified sentences and avoided special terminology when Korjikoff dictated the letters to her. Sablin's answers showed that the "little cherub" had read much and had thought a great deal. Little by little during the winter they grew to esteem each other. They found a coquettish pleasure in adorning their letters with unusual paradoxes, beautifully composed sentences and striking comparisons. From time to time Marousia would put in a long French sentence, which she never did when writing to others, and which she had considered always to be indecent. Or she would write an English word in English and thus underline her education. Sometimes Sablin would finish a serious letter with verses of Apouhtin or Fet, selected to suit the occasion and the stiff tone of the letter dealing with a serious political question would vanish. They seldom had the chance to talk alone at the Martoffs. Marousia always kept silent. She sang only after the discussions, sang well and with animation, but she always chose serious songs in which nothing was said of love and of passion.

"Who is she?" Sablin racked his brain and enveloped her in mystery in his thoughts, and prophesied a great future for her as an artist. He desired to see her alone so as to tell her openly that he liked her very much, that she charmed him, and to put her a straight question: "Was she a friend or an enemy?"

He saw her at the Alexandrinsky theatre when Kommissarjevskaya was playing. Two acts were over. He listened to the voice of the great artist and wondered of whose voice that of Kommissarjevskaya reminded him. "Yes, of course, Marousia's."

During the entracte he stood leaning against the barrier of the orchestra carelessly holding his coloured cap in his white gloved left hand. His eyes were wandering about the boxes looking for acquaintances. By chance he raised his eyes to the third balcony and saw Marousia. She was sitting in the first row of the balcony and she smiled at him when she saw that he was looking at her. Unconscious pleasure was reflected in that smile. Sablin immediately went towards the entrance. Marousia understood the purpose of his movement and met him



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on the staircase. They entered the foyer. Only a few people were there, and when they passed the tall sentries of the Guard infantry who stood before the doors leading to the Imperial box, the soldiers presented arms and turned their heads towards Sablin in one smart movement. Marousia started and then laughed.

"Is that for you?" she asked. "Can it be that you like it?"

She immediately grew confused, looked naïvely into his face to ascertain that he was not angry and noticing that his face had grown sad she said:

"Don't be angry, please. I don't know,—perhaps you are right, perhaps it is all necessary."

Sablin began to speak of Kommissarjevskaya. They walked down the corridor and Sablin could not fail to notice how beautiful Marousia was. In the mirrors she could see his handsome features near hers and a subtle smile flickered over her lips. "The sister of a soldier, the daughter of a workman," she thought, "walks at the side of the aristocrat. Beauty has made us equal."

They did not remember afterwards the thread of their conversation. He felt so pleased when Marousia raised her blue eyes to him and said:

"You also find that. . . . You have noticed it too? And did you notice how she said: 'I pity you' and began to speak, accompanied by the music? Ah! It was so beautiful! She is a genius, Alexander Nicolaievitch! What happiness it must mean to be such an artist! Thousands of people listen to her and enjoy her words and the music of her voice."

"You will surpass her, if only you wish it."

"You think so? . . . No, Alexander Nicolaievitch, tell me frankly, do you think that I have talent? No, you are not serious about it. It is cruel of you if you are laughing at me and telling me untruths on purpose. I would like to. . . . I don't know myself what I would like. . . . You probably think: What a stupid girl she must be if she doesn't know herself what she wants. . . ."

"And studies mathematics."

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"Don't, please. I do nothing of the kind. Perhaps I shall leave it all . . . perhaps I told you a lie. . . . I will go on the stage. . . . You don't know at all who I am."

"A pretty girl . . .," the words escaped Sablin.

She lowered her eyes and looked sad.

"Don't speak like this," . . . she said quietly, "don't . . . we must never speak of such things. It isn't good, and it isn't becoming to you. Let us be friends."

Their conversation was interrupted by the bell which announced the beginning of a new act.

"When shall we meet again?" he asked her.

"Will you be there on Thursday?"

"I would like very much to meet you again as I have done today: so as to talk to you freely and to feel that you had come only for me."

"If you wish, we could go to the Hermitage on Sunday. Do you like paintings? I will show you the Murillo's 'Madonna' which I worship.

On Sunday they passed four hours walking from hall to hall, stood in silence before the paintings and enjoyed being together.

Warm air came through the brass inlaid openings in the floor, the winter evening gloom filled the corners of the hall and the upper paintings could no longer be seen. A painter who had been copying the "Madonna," was wiping his brushes and getting ready to leave. Bright paint shone on the canvas and the Madonna appeared to be refreshed and renewed in the copy. Marousia looked fixedly at the painting. Her eyes were wide open and an ecstasy of admiration was reflected in them.

"One must believe and love to paint so . . ." she whispered.

Sablin did not look at the painting but his admiring eyes were resting on Marousia. She turned to him and laughed a short confused laugh.

"Why do you look at me so queerly?" she said and blushed under his gaze.

"You resemble so. . . ."

"Whom?"

Marousia guessed and lowered her eyes.

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"Don't . . . ," she said,—“you ought to be ashamed to tell me such things.”

“For me you mean . . . heaven itself. You make my soul rise to the clouds. You have aroused in me the best part of my nature, which till now has been sound asleep.”

Marousia looked at him severely, said nothing and walked quickly away. Her footsteps rang clearly on the marble floor of the gallery of sculpture and she descended the little steps of the wide staircase without looking back, her arms hanging limply at her sides. She stopped once or twice as if she were dizzy. A footman held her coat for her. They were the last to leave.

It was quite light outside. The clear March day was slowly fading away. The red rays of the setting sun were burning with colours of gold on the large windows of District Headquarters building. The Alexandrovsky column threw a long dark blue shadow. A sledge, drawn by a pair of fine black horses covered by a white net, drove out from under the arch. A horse car rattled under the trees on the right.

“Maria Mihailovna,” said Sablin, “let us go for a drive. The day is so fine. It must be wonderfully nice now at the islands.”

Marousia looked at Sablin. She was striving against a strong desire to enjoy the charm of the clear day, the sun, the beauty of the sky and of driving with him in a fast sleigh towards the wide spaces of the gulf. The strife lasted for a second.

Then her dark eyelashes lowered themselves half covering her eyes and shutting away her thoughts and desires. Her face became calm and proud.

“Thank you, Alexander Nicolaievitch, but we must reach an agreement on one thing. Never ask me about it again. It is both unnecessary and impossible. I go to the right, and you go to the left.”

“And if I also have to go to the right?”

“Then I will go to the left.”

Sablin sighed. He had already learned that it was useless to argue with Marousia. She shook his hand, descended the steps of the Hermitage and walked away.

Sablin watched her go, watched her little feet step over the

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granite slabs covered with yellow sand and saw her turn the corner of the Moika without even once looking back.

"What is it then?" thought Sablin, "is it fascination, passion, love, or sympathy?"

He felt happier than ever before.

### XXXIX

THE coronation of the Emperor and Empress was to take place at Moscow in the spring. The first squadron and the band were sent from the regiment. Sablin was in the second squadron but the Commander of the regiment gave the order for him to be attached to the first and to leave with it for Moscow. He was sent to the coronation not because he was a smart officer who was doing his work thoroughly and who knew the soldiers better than the other officers, but because he was physically handsome and "in the style" of the men of the first squadron. This offended him. Matzneff said, with his usual cynicism.

"Yes, dear Sasha, don't be born clever, but be born handsome, don't be born wealthy, don't even be born lucky—although that's what the proverb says: 'Beauty is everything' and for a man it means as much as it does for a woman. Remember my words, Sasha, some day you will be the Emperor's A.D.C., you will command a regiment—you will have everything that you may desire and only because you are handsome. Everyone who looks at you wishes to do something to please you. A woman longs to gratify you and a man also tries to be nice to you."

The service at Moscow consisted only in guard-work and in forming living barriers in the streets and the squares. This did not have to be done every day and the officers did not know how to fill their time. Sablin walked through the streets where the Emperor's passage was expected, and which were filled by crowds of people. He watched them, listened to what they said and tried to understand their feelings.

He soon felt that for the people, as for himself, the Tsar was a wonderful being, a Demi-God. In their minds the Tsar could only be gracious and a source of happiness. Everything that

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came from the Tsar was considered sacred. Simple women and ladies of society tried to pick up flowers on which his foot had trodden. The people pushed and crowded to see him, and saw not the reality but what they wanted to see in its place. The Tsar and the Tsaritzza appeared to them as wonderfully beautiful and perfect creatures, the Emperor seemed to be very tall and to have a charming smile always on his lips.

Many things exasperated and displeased the people but they laid the blame for them all on the nobles, who in their minds separated the Tsar from the people and systematically robbed and oppressed them. Here, among the Moscow coronation crowds, Sablin for the first time realised what a deep gulf existed in the minds of the people between themselves and the nobles. To the people the Tsar was a divinity, and the nobles were the dark powers which tried to separate them from this divinity, because of their own personal and material interest.

Moscow was illuminated. The Kremlin and the tower of Ivan the Great appeared on the background of the dark sky like a lace work of electric lights. It was a marvel of luxury and beauty. Searchlights threw their rays along the streets, fireworks were burned in many places. Life seemed to be transformed into a magic dream and the people moving about the streets and the squares, expressed their wonder, but were discontented and grim.

"A much finer illumination was ordered to be arranged," a workman said not far from Sablin. "The Emperor made a grant of ten millions for the illumination and only five have been spent."

"Where did the rest go to?" a peasant asked him.

The workman looked round in a scared manner and said with conviction:

"The nobles stole it!"

"Oh, what doings!" sighed the peasant—"even here!"

Something else Sablin noticed in the crowd. The people feared that some evil might be done to the Tsar and they did not trust each other. But what disgusted Sablin most of all, their fear was not for the Tsar, but rather that they themselves



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might suffer. It would seem that the people who loved the Emperor so deeply and who feared that something might happen to him, ought to form a compact wall around him and render criminal attempts impossible. But in reality things were quite different. The people were attracted by the Emperor, they wanted to see him, but at the same time they were afraid because it was dangerous to be near him. During the illumination the roar of an explosion was heard in one of the side streets where Sablin knew for certain the Emperor could not pass. Sablin was in the midst of a great crowd and they all rushed away in the opposite direction from the explosion. Only Sablin and a few others ran to find out what was the matter. Gas had exploded in a cellar, which was happily empty at the time. Several windows were smashed and a fire broke out which was immediately put out by local means. The people who had come to help were pleased that all had ended so well but they seemed to be disappointed too.

Near the Emperor himself, in the Kremlin and elsewhere, the same faces could always be seen crowding round him. They tried not to let others approach the Emperor. They spoke little, had a worried appearance and looked suspiciously at everyone,—even at Sablin. Sablin knew that these men, women and even children were agents of the secret police, and not the people. The people wanted to see the Emperor but they could not get near him. For that reason the Emperor could not see the real people and the real people could not see the Emperor. This aroused Sablin's indignation. He believed in the people and loved the Emperor and it seemed queer and ridiculous to him that the people were not allowed to approach the Tsar.

He decided to go to the Hodinsky field where entertainments for the people had been arranged and where the Tsar was to appear among his subjects and feast in their midst, as in bygone days the legendary Tsar Vladimir, the Red Sun, and his "bogatirs" had done. Sablin knew that platforms had been erected on the Hodinsky field, tables set and beer, honey, cakes and sweets prepared for the people. He knew that the real people—peasants from neighbouring villages, workmen of the great

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Moscow factories, and town servants had been assembling there not only from early morning but even from the eve of the appointed day so as to be sure of receiving the Tsar's present. Sablin was staying at the house of distant relatives and their servants were also going to the Hodinsky field. He was touched by the feeling of sanctity which these servants attached to the Tsar's present, for he knew that the whole thing consisted of a tin cup roughly painted and filled with poor, stale sweets. It was worth not more than fifty copecks and it could be purchased at that price but everyone went to receive it for nothing from the Tsar.

"I will bring it home and put it before the ikons," said the old cook. "When I pray I shall think of our father the Tsar and of our mother the Tsaritzza."

Sablin decided to rise before dawn and go, not for the present, but to see the display of the pure feelings of the people's love for the Tsar.

### XL

Notwithstanding the early hour the streets were filled with people. Sablin did not have to ask the way. They were all going in the same direction and hastened so as not to be late. Everyone knew that many presents had been prepared, that there would be enough for all, but nevertheless they all hurried, pushed, and looked angrily at each other. Greed moved the people. Not emotion at the fact that they were going to see the Tsar feasting with his people, not admiration of this symbol of unity, but the greed of getting for nothing something that could not be purchased made these men and women hurry towards the Hodinsky field. People of the most different professions and positions were going there. Rich and poor could be seen in the crowd but all were dressed in their holiday clothes. There were many children, schoolboys and schoolgirls, and even women with babies in their arms.

Sablin noticed several times that he also hurried in this hurrying, bustling crowd. He slackened his pace but the crowd pushed him along and he had to walk quickly again.

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After passing the Tversky gates, the Siou factory and several other houses Sablin saw that a large field which stretched to the left of the road was covered by a black multitude of people. The beginning of the distribution of the presents was fixed for the afternoon, it was only six o'clock in the morning and yet the field was already covered by a crowd. As Sablin approached the field, he felt that he was penned up in the crowd and that he could not get back. The crowds which were coming behind him had already formed a compact human wall. He looked round. At his side were a stout merchant in a long skirted coat, a very tall official with a decoration on his breast, a young girl with a student, and a workman.

"How is it that God bears our sins," said the merchant wiping his perspiring brow,—“such crowds of people and not a single policeman in sight.”

“So you're sad not to see the ‘pharaos’ ?” \* said the workman.

The merchant glanced at him sideways and did not answer.

“There has been an order from above,” the official said, respectfully looking at Sablin,—“that there should be no police and that complete freedom should be given to the people. I have heard that the Emperor was greatly pleased by the perfect order which has been kept during the illumination and has ordered the police to be removed for today.”

“Well, let's go forward,” said the merchant and carefully pushing Sablin aside with his elbow began to press forward.

“Where are you going to without permission. See how you have pushed the officer.”

“I am going where everybody else is going.”

And indeed the crowd was pressing from behind and slowly moved forward.

“Don't push, don't you see that there is a child here,” the frightened voice of a woman was heard in the crowd.

“How can we see him.”

Flushed and perplexed men were pushing their way back

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\* Nickname for the police.

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through the crowd. They carried handkerchiefs with the presents.

"Has the distribution begun?" they were asked.

They wiped their foreheads, looked round in perplexity and said gruffly:

"Several fellows have got over the fence there and threw them into the crowd."

"How disorderly!"

"One can't stay there long, brothers. It is nice here, plenty of space. . . . But there . . . a girl has been crushed to death and she is standing dead in the crowd. One can't get her out."

"How horrible!"

"It is horrible. Several beggars of the Prohorovsky factory got over the fence there. They saw a great barrel of beer placed upon posts and decided to make it fall so as to get at the beer. Well, they began to shake the posts."

"Did they make it fall?"

"They did. Eighteen or twenty men were crushed to death by the barrel."

"And what did the people do?"

"The people? The people drank the beer. Everyone wanted to taste the Tsar's beer."

"So you say that men have been killed?"

"Why, yes. They lie there quite white."

"And you say the people are drinking beer?"

"Why, yes. They aren't human, they're like animals now. It doesn't matter to them."

"Well, boys, what about it? The distribution is going on over there and we wait here? We have as much right to it as they have. Come on forward!"

The crowd swayed and moved forward. Sablin did not want to go, he knew that it was madness, but the crowd swept him along with it.

An open space appeared ahead. It seemed odd that there was no one there and the crowd swarmed towards it so as to come nearer to the coveted fence. The back rows pressed hard, the front ones almost ran and could not stop. But when they came

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to the open they tried to stop, to throw themselves aside, but could not. The crowd pushed them on. The earth vanished from under their feet. The open space was covered by ditches and remains of the foundations of the buildings for the exhibition which had been held here some time before. Stones and bricks were scattered about. The front ranks, their eyes wide open with horror, stumbled and fell to the bottom, tried to rise, shouted something but already other people were falling on top of them and the ditches were filled with bodies. The crowd tried to stop, to let these people get out, but that was impossible; the pressure from behind was too great. The crowd pushed the front ranks down and made them walk over the bodies.

"Stop! You can't go here! People are lying here!"

"Don't push! We shall have to walk on bodies!"

"Are they alive?"

"Who knows? Only don't push!"

"Go on, go on! Why do you stop!"

"The distribution! Hoorah!"

"Come on, boys!"

"Don't push so!"

"I'm being pushed myself."

"Oh! Great God!"

People were still moving and attempting to crawl in the ditch, but it was impossible not to walk on them. With horror and disgust one's foot was placed on someone's back, on a child's arm or on a face. Attempts to step lightly so as not to feel living flesh beneath were unsuccessful. The pressure from behind was too great and it was necessary to step firmly so as not to fall.

"Oh! Heavens!"

"They don't move, the poor things!"

"That's a fine present!"

"Where have the police disappeared to!?"

"Sablin stopped when he came to that place. The merchant, the student and several other persons stopped simultaneously. They formed a barrier forcing the crowd to flow past them. They began to pull the corpses out of the ditch as soon as the crowd became less compact.



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"Oh, Great God!" groaned the merchant, "what a day this is! Look at the number of them!"

There were hundreds of them. To the right and to the left the ditch was filled with bodies. Some might still be alive. Other volunteers joined Sablin. The police were notified and appeared, looking ashamed and guilty. Military engineers were summoned to dig out the men who had been trampled into the earth, firemen were called out with barrels of water and wagons. The hour for the Emperor's arrival was approaching, and it was necessary to restore order in the field. Shouts and coarse yells were heard on the other side of the fence where drunken revelry was going on. Here, on the trampled dusty field white faced corpses were laid out in long rows. Children with pale-green thin faces distorted by suffering, schoolboys, schoolgirls . . . Sablin was going around with a pail of water which had been brought by the student who had run for at least a mile to fetch it. Sablin tried to find men in whom there was yet a breath of life.

"Here," a girl shouted to him kneeling near the massive body of a bearded dvornik,—*"I believe he breathes."*

Some, most of them men, came back to life. They looked 'round stupidly and their heads trembled. They did not understand what had happened.

People who had got their presents were passing by on their return. They chatted merrily, pleased with their booty. Two simply dressed young girls were passing and each carried three presents.

"I got hold of mine, my dear, and shouted to that fellow with the curly hair—'give me some more.' He was so gallant—threw me two!"

"I had luck too. My dress got torn but I also got three."

They noticed the long rows of those who had not reached the presents.

"Oh, God! What is it? Are they quite dead?!"

"What dreadful things people can do!"

"What beasts! Look at this girl, she's beautiful. Probably someone loved her."

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"It may be, but he'd leave her all the same. That's always the way with us, we're loved until the first misfortune comes."

"There must be more than a thousand of them!"

They passed on.

### XLI

It was impossible to conceal the tragedy which had happened on the Hodinsky field. Its extent was greatly diminished, when reported to the Emperor and an attempt was made to persuade him not to visit the field and to cancel the festivities. The Emperor considered that this would leave a bad impression among the people and also the foreigners. He ordered the program to begin as arranged and drove to the Hodinsky field with the Empress in an open carriage.

Hose wagons were slowly returning from the field along the left side of the Petersburg road. Corpses filled them to the top. At the edges, under the tarpaulins, feet could be seen, swaying quietly. Peasant top-boots, transparent stockings, someone's old worn shoes, the lace trimming of a skirt and the tiny feet of a child lay side by side. All of them, rich and poor, old and young, had become equal in death. Ordinary wagons with the same terrible load were slowly following the fire teams. The Emperor drove along the right side of the road. It was impossible for him not to hear the sad quiet sounds of the wagon bells and not to see the long files of loaded wagons. He understood that the extent of the calamity had been concealed from him and that it was a catastrophe. The Empress was pale. Sadly, with mountains of corpses, the Russian people met her, the crowned Tsaritzza.

A vast sea of human heads could be seen from the wooden pavilion which the Emperor entered.

Musicians were placed on a platform before the pavilion. They played the National Anthem.

The crowd howled and roared below. Most of the tables had been swept away, wine and beer barrels were overturned, the sacks with the presents were carried away. But the crowd was seized with enthusiasm at the sight of the Emperor, caps

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flew in a black cloud into the air and the wild "hurrah" of the crowd swept over the field.

The Empress, pale and with red spots on her cheeks, looked with horror at the people. The natives of Kamerun would probably have seemed less wild to her. She had just seen piles of dead bodies crushed to death by these very people and she expected to find them repentant and reverently silent.

A moujik with a dishevelled beard, in an unbuttoned vest which showed his hairy black chest, with a bottle of beer in his outstretched hand looked at her with wild eyes and roared "hurrah," heavily stamping his feet, clad in top boots. A grey bearded old man in a white shirt and a long "kaftan," knelt before the pavilion and bowed, touching the earth with his bald, perspiring head. A young fellow with one arm clasped round the waist of a flushed, handsome young girl, waved a cap over his head with the other and sang something.

These were separate spots against the general background of the roaring and swaying crowd, but they remained fixed in the memory of the Empress for the rest of her life. And when she was spoken to about the people she always remembered the kneeling, aged man with a patriarchal beard, the drunken dishevelled moujik and the young fellow with the girl, against the background of the black, wildly roaring crowd. She remembered the quiet sad bells of the wagons laden with something terrible at which one must not look and which nevertheless attracted the eyes.

The Grand Dukes and Princesses who accompanied the Emperor threw into the crowd presents which they had prepared beforehand and the crowd threw itself upon them and fought for them tearing them to pieces. And over all this scene rose the mighty, beautiful sounds of the Russian National Anthem. Everything was lit by the rays of the hot sun which never once betrayed the Emperor during the days of his sacred coronation.

The concert began. Fragments of Russian operas were played and their airs floated over the noisy field but it seemed that the sad bells of the wagons with their terrible load could be heard through the melody of the violins.

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The Emperor stayed for half an hour at the Hodinsky field and drove back. The pair of fine grey horses which drew his carriage overtook in the town the wagons with the corpses and passed them, snorting with fright. Women's and children's feet could be seen quietly swaying under the edges of the tarpaulins.

The crowd swarmed behind them in an even current, trying to overtake them. Sablin was walking in the crowd.

"The Emperor has passed."

"Then he must have seen what has happened."

"The Emperor isn't responsible for it. It's the fault of the police. They ought to have seen to the order. The Emperor does not know what the crowds are like but the police do. They're experienced."

"It isn't the fault of the police but of the builders."

"Well, my dear, whosever fault it may be, remember my words: that's a bad omen. Such a lot of people perished for nothing on the very day of the feast! It'll be a hard reign. . . . A bloody one."

It was the general opinion that it was a bad augury. Mystical horror hung over Moscow. It was intended to cancel the rest of the festivities—the ball, the parade and the races but the Emperor stood the test and remained at Moscow till the end.

The same evening he appeared with the Empress at a ball given by the French ambassador. Both were pale and their smiles seemed feigned and constrained. Dancing began but neither the Emperor nor the Empress took part in it. They looked on for several minutes from a corner of the hall and then left.

They felt heavy at heart. They were accomplishing a difficult duty before the people, but the latter thought otherwise and said: "Numbers of people have perished because of them and they don't seem to mind a bit! . . . They continue to amuse themselves!"

The Emperor ordered a strict inquest, the punishment of the guilty, the funeral of the victims to be at his expense and the issue of a liberal grant to the families. Rumours raised the size

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of that grant to huge dimensions, and some people even envied their neighbours whose eight-year-old girl had been trampled to death. But when just a few hundred rubles had been issued, gossip again began about the nobles who had stolen the gifts of the Emperor which had not reached the true sufferers.

People sighed in the dark parts of Moscow and said: "Yes, God is high up, the Tsar is far away, so how can you get at the truth?" Anger and spite were concealed and accumulated until the hour of vengeance.

### XLII

ON the evening of that day Sablin was invited to a party at the house of a relative of Princess Repnin where all the officers of the regiment who were at Moscow were to be present. He went there and spoke almost with tears in his eyes about what he had seen at Hodinka, but his narrative was received coldly.

"There is nothing unusual about such events," remarked the adjutant puffing at his cigar,—“at the coronation festivities of Queen Victoria even more people perished. But the English are cultured people, they managed to conceal the fact and did not make something dramatic out of it.”

"They ought to have called out the Cossacks and let the horsemen keep the crowd away from the entrances. That wasn't done."

"Did you hear, gentlemen, that Vlassoffsky, the Chief of Police, has shot himself. It affected him so deeply."

"He has done right," said Count Pensky, the Commander of the first squadron.

"There was nothing else left for him if he was an honest man," said Prince Repnin.

"But, Prince," Sablin said passionately, "what had Vlassoffsky to do with it, when he received an order from the Emperor not to detail police to the festivities? All had gone off so well during the illumination."

A chill which ran through the group made him feel that he had said something out of place.

"Don't forget, Lieutenant," the adjutant told him coldly,



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"that not all the orders of the Emperor have to be executed to the letter. One must use one's own discretion. The noble wish of the Emperor, his touching belief in the common sense of the Russian people ought to have been made widely known, but Vlassoffsky ought to have taken on himself the responsibility for not complying with the order. The people would have cursed him, the Emperor would probably have feigned not to notice it or, at the worst, he would have dismissed Vlassoffsky from his post and forgiven him afterwards. But we would not have had all these disgusting events which they haven't even managed to conceal from the Emperor and the foreigners."

"Three days ago I spoke privately with his Majesty," said Prince Repnin and all present listened with respectful alertness. "The Emperor confided to me that he felt the Divine blessing descend on him during the ceremony of the anointment. He told me that he hopes to make war impossible and to have all quarrels between nations decided at conferences by arbitration. He hopes to unite France, England and Germany through Russia. He is equally benevolent towards all of these States. The late Emperor knew what he was doing when he chose a German Princess as wife for his son, and especially one of a modest House."

"She will be a new Catherine the Great," said the stout Lieutenant Metelin, who had a reputation for making awkward remarks.

"How majestically beautiful the young Empress was in her attire of a Russian Tsaritzza," said the adjutant,—*"the beauty of a woman was harmonised in her with the majesty of a goddess."*

Sablin listened, was silent, and wondered.

"What about the beautiful girl," he thought. "who was lying in the dust with the marks of a heel on her temple? She was well-dressed, apparently was of good family and was now needlessly stretched on the slope of the ditch. What about that little schoolboy with a green face on which the eyebrows appeared as dark lines? His mother had carefully fitted him out in the morning, and now he was thrown on a car and driven away. What was it? An accident, a lack of administrative talent on

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the part of Vlassoffsky, or a great bloody sacrifice of human beings made to some terrible non-Christian God for the purpose of making the new reign happy? Whatever it was, Sablin felt that it was terrible. It was not to the Emperor's advantage. His heart wavered for the first time. . . . Oh! He never for a moment ceased to love and idolise the Emperor, but why, why did it all happen? Why did the Emperor and the Empress see all this horror and how could they bear it? Sablin felt as if ever hereafter he would hear that sad tinkling of the wagon bells and would be haunted by the sight of those human feet quietly swaying under the tarpaulins!

He did not try to find fault with men. But in his heart he questioned God. How could He, the Almighty, allow this to happen? Why did He not prevent this terrible execution of innocent people? And if He did allow it, what did he want to communicate to the Tsar and the people by this terrible sign and why, why did the benign Jesus, who loved human beings so dearly, why did He allow this?

Why?!!

### XLIII

ON his return from Moscow Sablin wrote a long letter to Marousia. He sincerely and minutely described to her not only what he had seen at Hodinka, but also his feelings and his doubt of God. He begged her to meet him. He wrote that only Marousia's kind young heart would understand him and might perhaps dispel the horrible nightmare which was haunting him. Marousia instantly answered him. She fixed the place for their meeting at a rather unusual spot at Lahta, on the shore of the Finnish gulf.

Sablin saw Marousia on the sandy beach when he emerged from the wide Morskaya street bordered by tall birch trees. She was sitting on a stone with her back turned towards him. She was dressed in a simple straw hat, white blouse and blue skirt. A cloak lay on her knees and she was drawing something on the sand with her umbrella. The waves were running up

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to her feet with a quiet murmur. A light wind played with her dark curls and caressed her cheeks with them.

She was thinking of something and gazing at the sea. The yellow waves were rising and quietly sparkling in the evening sun, foaming at their crests and scattering at Marousia's feet. Farther on the sea had a leaden colour and the crests of the waves showed white upon it. A black, clumsy looking steamer with a low funnel from which poured dense black smoke which stretched far back over the sea, heavily pulled three low, black barges. A large sailing boat was coming from another direction. Farther on could be seen the low opposite shore of the gulf bordered by dark forests over which rose in the distance the hardly noticeable mounts of Kirchhof and Duderhof. The buildings and the churches of the Sergievsky monastery appeared as white spots against the dark background.

The quiet sadness of the north was over everything. The sea did not charm, did not threaten or attract. It seemed quietly to caress the level shores and the wide spaces of Russia's lowlands. Behind the sand of the beach came a green meadow, rising not more than three feet above it.

The slim, quietly dressed young girl was in harmony with the simple scenery of the Northern sea and seemed so beautiful on the background of the yellow waves that Sablin stopped and gazed at her.

Marousia looked 'round, saw him and rose to meet him. Sablin looked at his watch.

"No, no, Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Marousia, "you aren't late. I purposely came earlier to enjoy this view. I know of no lovelier one."

Sablin looked at Marousia. She seemed to have grown much more beautiful since he had last seen her.

"Yes," she said, waiting for an answer and not receiving any. "It is a very simple view. There are no violet hills here, no dark blue sky, no green waves full of mystical depth. There is nothing of what the painters love so much, but there is no view that I love better, perhaps because it is one of my native land."

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She spoke the word "native" with much warmth and softness.

"But, Maria Mihailovna, what about the opinion you held that the idea of the native land is merely relative, and that men should not recognize that word because they should feel that the whole earth is their native land and all humanity their brothers?"

She grew confused and did not answer. She could not lie. She felt now that she loved with all her heart the dull looking sea and the flat land over which spread a pale clouded sky. She loved it because it was her native land. Why should she deceive others and herself? She loved the whole world, yes, but she had a particular love for her Russia, with its beautiful language, simple views and rough people. And out of the whole of boundless Russia she loved most of all this quiet sad view which had once inspired Peter the Great to found a city. In spite of the names of the Robespierres, Marats, Risakoffs, Peehanoffs and of Marx which were thrust upon her, out of all the heroes of the history of the world she valued most of all and loved, yes loved, although she concealed it, the mighty Peter who beheaded the "Streltzi,"\* cut the beards of the boyars, drank and revelled and in the meantime accomplished great deeds and created the Russian Empire. And out of all the Russian people she for some reason liked best this trim youth who now stood before her in a fresh white tunic, blue trousers and top-boots with spurs. For some reason she preferred him to comrades Pavel and Korjikoff who at every moment were in danger of arrest.

"Tell me about the coronation. How did this tragedy happen? How could it be so horrible, was it really arranged on purpose?" she asked.

They sat down on a large flat stone. It was comfortable but narrow and Sablin for the first time felt her young body near him and saw her blue eyes looking closely at him. She used

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\* The Guard of the Moscow Tsars. They offered resistance to the reforms of Peter the Great and were disbanded by him.

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no perfume but the fragrance of youth and of her hair made him nervous.

His voice shook when he answered.

"Of course it couldn't have been arranged on purpose. The stupidity of the builders caused it. They hadn't thought that such a great crowd would be present and didn't realise its terrible power. The Emperor overestimated the good qualities of the people and of the crowd. He thought that they were sensible, had noble instincts and were full of brotherly love. He did not want to restrain them by police, he did not want to curtail their freedom."

Gradually his voice grew firmer. He described the Emperor as an ideal Monarch who would create a golden age of Russian history. There would be no gruff police, no troops, and all the questions would be decided at conferences. Such were Sablin's ideas about the Emperor. This first failure made such a deep impression on him, and showed him that although the Tsar might be prepared to start with these far-reaching reforms, the people were not ready for them.

But Sablin did not blame the people. He picked out of the great rough crowd the merchant, the student who ran for a verst to fetch water, the young girl who knelt near a fainting moujik and bathed his head. He idealised them. In his description the calamity only served to emphasize the beautiful qualities of the Russian people and gave an opportunity to the Monarch to reveal the nobility of his heart. The Emperor could not be comforted, the Empress wept, they visited the families of the victims and distributed money. Why had Sablin invented all this? He did not know himself. He would have acted in this way and he attributed to the Emperor such actions as he would have liked to see him accomplish.

The blue eyes changed their colour, sometimes a smile would reveal white moist teeth, at others her lips would be tightly pressed together in suffering for the people, but her eyes were constantly fixed on Sablin's.

She questioned. He answered. The description of the coronation was ended, all the Moscow topics had been dis-



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cussed but their conversation did not stop. The day was quietly burning away before them, the sun was setting and on the golden sky appeared the misty silhouettes of the funnels, forts and churches of Kronstadt. A chill dampness came from the sea. The dusk of the white night was falling over the waves which were quieting down. White crests no longer appeared in the middle of the Gulf, the sea murmured softly and rolled up its transparent waves to their feet. Marousia rose and put on her cloak.

"It is time to go," she said straightening her slim form, silhouetted on the background of the clear sky.

He closed his eyes. A passionate desire rose in him.

He looked 'round like a thief. His face became red. Blood throbbed in his temples. He was disgusted with himself at the moment. But he could not resist the temptation. She was too beautiful and he felt that she was attracted by him. Sablin threw down the coat which he had carried and tried to embrace her.

She started aside. Her face had a frightened expression. Her cheeks grew pale and her eyes were lowered.

"Oh, forgive me," he exclaimed. "Forgive me. I am mad. I am a fool and a scoundrel. Don't be angry with me."

"I am not angry," she said quietly and walked away from the sea.

He followed her and felt that he ought to speak but could not find the necessary words. He kept awkwardly silent and did not dare to walk at her side.

She walked more rapidly, almost ran, but he followed at her heels. They came at last to the bridge over the Bobilsky channel where boats could be hired.

"Forgive me. I am so guilty . . ." he whispered and she felt tears in his voice.

"It is my fault," said Marousia. "I ought not to have come here."

She descended towards the boats.

"May I come with you?" Sablin asked.

She did not answer but silently made place for him on the

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bench. He sat at her side. She was nervously wrapping herself in her cloak. The boatsman rowed calmly with short even strokes.

At Staraia Derevnia she went towards the horse car. Sablin followed her.

"No, for Heavens sake. I can't stand it any longer," Marousia whispered in an imploring voice, stretching out to him her cold hand. He bent over it and respectfully kissed it. Her hand shivered in his but she did not take it away.

"Farewell," Marousia said quietly.

"Good-bye," Sablin said looking fixedly into her eyes.

Marousia did not answer and jumped into the car, which was already moving.

Sablin went on foot. For some time he could see through the pale dusk of the white night her straw hat with a red ribbon and her bent head.

She never once looked back towards him.

## XLIV

THAT year the camp training was difficult and dull. New cavalry regulations had just been introduced. They were simple. All the vocal commands of the section commanders were cancelled and replaced by signals, the ranks grew quiet and silent. Baron Drevenitz had been brought up in entirely different traditions. He did not understand the new regulations and grew nervous. He drove the squadron commanders, practised with them with matches which he laid about the table and repeated the same cavalry manœuvres during drill on foot.

The summer was rainy. The Krasnoie Selo manœuvre field grew muddy and was trampled into a jelly of clay. The squadrons splashed at a gallop through the mud, men were worried by incessant practise and everyone swore and bustled about fearing the Grand Duke.

Old Generals were seized with awe when he appeared on the manœuvre field on his big white and black Irish horse. He was usually accompanied by the cold pedantic General Palitzin, four orderly trumpeters and an Ural Cossack with a huge

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orange flag. Rapidly he crossed the field and halted near the Tsar's Mound from which he watched the drill of the cavalry. Sometimes an orderly officer would detach himself from his escort and would gallop towards some regiment. The heart would sink in the breast of the regimental Commander as he galloped towards the Grand Duke and halted before his rigid form with features which seemed to be carved out of stone.

Rotbek counted that during one exercise he turned about with his section seventy-six times to the left. The horses, the men, the officers,—all grew listless and waited with impatience for the day of the regimental inspection after which the brigade and division manoeuvres would begin.

Sablin felt depressed. He heard nothing from Marousia. His letters were left unanswered. The Martoffs had left for the country, the young people who met there were nowhere to be seen, and Sablin did not even know where Marousia was. He hoped to meet her by chance in town. Sablin spent two Sundays driving to the Lahta and strolling about the Summer Gardens. For half an hour he walked about the Nicolaievskaya street before the house of the Martoffs,—but he did not meet Marousia anywhere. This irritated him. Sablin returned to the camp and found everyone getting ready for regimental inspection. Rotbek was studying the program of events which had been sent from the regimental office. Soldiers of the section were polishing straps in the yard, saddles were hung on the fence and their stirrups sparkled in the sun. The day was fresh and clouds shut the sun out of sight from time to time. The bandsmen were practising signalling in a yard several cottages away. Rotbek listened to them and hummed the words of the bugle calls. Then he and Sablin practised the signals.

## XLV

THE inspection came off very well. "With the highest possible number of points," as the Division Commander said. The Grand Duke, who stood near the Tsar's Mound, twice sent an officer to convey his thanks. No one fell, the alignment was perfect, the intervals were well kept. The pace of the gallop

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was normal and everything was done well, as it should be done in "our" regiment. Lunch was served at the Mess after the inspection. The Division Commander was present and the band played.

The Division Commander with his Staff had just left and the officers who had been seeing him off returned to finish their ices and wine. The Baron, pleased and happy over the success of the regiment now felt certain that he would receive the command of a brigade in the spring and would then be able to rest. He unbuttoned his tunic, puffed at his cigar and said in broken Russian, with a smile on his round red face, to Repnin:

"That was an excellent invention of this little spitzbube. He placed poles. I came and saw a pole here, a pole there, it was excellent to keep direction. "Gentlemen," he said addressing the officers who sat 'round the large table,—“you can follow my example and unbutton your tunics and smoke. A fine regiment, fine young men!" he said, addressing Repnin.

The table hummed with voices like a bee hive. In the next room the band played a medley of Italian songs in which the voices were drowned.

The sun shone more rarely outside, great white clouds covering it. The leaves of an aspen tree quivered tremulously before the window. A cold wind was blowing from the sea and promising rain.

Rotbek was sitting at the far corner of the table surrounded by a group of youngsters and was saying seriously:

"I drink General Pouff's health for the first time. I rise once, I tap once with a finger of the right hand, then once with a finger of the left, I stamp the right foot once then the left and drink down one glass of champagne. Is that it, Petristcheff?"

"Yes, only you begin by tapping your fingers and you rise in the end," Petristcheff said equally seriously.

"All right. I'll begin then. God help me not to mix it all up. I drink General Pouff's health for the first time. . . ."

At the other end of the table Matzneff, Gritzenko and Fetissoff were discussing the origin of philosophy.

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"Own up, Ivan Sergeievitch, that philosophy is nonsense," Gritzenko, who had drunk too much wine, was saying,— "it comes from indigestion, your philosophy."

"Perhaps mine does," Matzneff replied calmly, "but you can't deny Socrates and Plato, you can't close your eyes on Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Then, my dear friend, a new teaching is growing up before our eyes which may overturn the world and Christianity. It is the teaching of Marx."

"Have you read him?" Gritzenko asked. Matzneff hesitated for a moment.

"I haven't read all his works, my dear friend. I hadn't the time, and then he's difficult to read. But the things he preaches are horrible. I really don't know what may happen once it affects our heavy Russian brains with our great inclination for brigandage and mutiny."

"We have lived through Razin, Boulavin and Pugatcheff,\* and with God's help we will crush Marx."

"Yes, but they were simple illiterate Cossacks and here you have a German philosopher . . . a scientist."

"Hang it! We're still alive!"

"I drink General Pouff's health for the second time," Rotbek's voice solemnly rang through the dining hall,— "I tap two fingers twice on the table, I stamp my foot twice, I rise twice and I drink two glasses of champagne! So!"

"He will get tight!" Matzneff said nodding at Rotbek.

"Let him. He's a fine fellow and a smart officer," said Gritzenko. "We need men like him. He wouldn't hesitate to charge and to die without a complaint or a groan. You watch him,— his section is in order, he isn't slack in discipline with his soldiers but drives them skillfully. He does everything willingly and well."

"Yes, he also is a philosopher," said Matzneff,— "such men as he, men who do not question things deeply, must be happy. The sun smiled on them at their birth and this sunny smile has re-

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\* All three were notorious leaders of rebellions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

mained with them forever. They have been blinded by the sun. They don't see anything that is terrible."

"But what do you see? Why do you speak of unpleasant things? Our life flows on without worries. You remember, you once compared it to a brilliant feast where many excellent dishes were served on the table. You can take, eat and everything is yours."

"I am seized with fear, Pavel Ivanovitch, when the doubt comes to me, whether it is really mine? What if someone else comes, pushes me away and says—enough! I also want to have some!"

"Eh, my dear friend, there will be enough for all."

"But think of the numbers of hungry who crave only for crumbs falling from the table. What if they are seized by hatred?"

"The hungry are weak and submissive. They have no power even in hatred. Only the well-fed are to be feared."

"That is bad philosophy, Pavel Ivanovitch. You know, I sometimes feel afraid in the service. The horses are animals, the men are no better. Both are ignorant, foreign to us and strong. What if they wage war upon us?"

"What if the horses start kicking you?" Gritsenko said laughing. "Drink, Ivan Sergeievitch, it will help you."

"The horses may throw me and the men may laugh at my orders, turn away and disperse."

"Hit them on the snout and nothing will happen," Gritsenko said, pouring champagne into Matusevich's glass.

The band played an air from *Carmen* and a cornet poured forth passionate sounds.

Rorbek, pale, with bulging eyes was enunciating with difficulty:

"I drink the health of General Pouff-pouff-pouff-pouff-pouff for the fifth time. . . . It's a fine invention of the d . . . d cuirassiers. An elephant couldn't stand it. And neither can I!"

He rose. His face became deathly pale. A soldier servant ran up to him and led him away.

At that moment the orderly officer Lieutenant Kislov en-

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tered the room. It was strange to see him in his tightly fitting tunic with his sword and revolver, among these half drunken men with their unbuttoned tunics. He approached the regimental Commander and reported.

"Your Excellency, an event has happened in the regiment. Lieutenant Baron Korff has shot himself."

"When?" Baron Drevenitz asked, rising and buttoning his tunic.

"This very moment, in his cottage."

"Gentlemen," the regimental Commander said, raising his voice,—*"I ask you to go home. . . . Our comrade, Baron Korff is no more. . . ."*

The band continued to play a melody from *Carmen*. Rotbek entered the dining room looking fresh and said:

"He must have been a strong fellow this General Pouff if so many people drink in his honour. Petristcheff, the first time doesn't count. I'll begin again. . . ."

## XLVI

LIEUTENANT BARON KORFF was lying stretched on his bed. He was already dead. His features bore an expression of cold rest and surprise. He was in a shirt, breeches and top-boots. The shirt was covered with blood on the left side of his breast and a pool of blood, red and still warm was on the floor. The squadron medical assistant, a soldier, sat on the bed at his side and continued to hold the hand of the Baron. He rose and stood at attention when the regimental Commander with the Adjutant and Prince Reprin entered the cottage.

"Is he dead?" Baron Drevenitz asked him.

"He died half a minute ago, Your Excellency," answered the surgeon. .

"Mad child!" Drevenitz muttered. He was greatly displeased. The suicide, apart from being a stain on the reputation of the regiment, prevented him from spending two days in the country with his family as he had intended. He would have to write reports and be present at the Te-Deums and at the

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funeral. No, it would be impossible for him now to leave the camp!

"Did he suffer long?" Prince Repnin asked.

"Yes, Your Excellency," the soldier answered,—“he was still living when I ran in. He kept calling his mother and saying:

‘Ah, why! Why did I do it! Save me! I will give you all I have! Save me!’ But what could I do? The bullet had very nearly touched the heart. Then he grew quieter and only called his mother.”

The Baron frowned.

"Did he leave a note?" he asked.

"Yes, there is one," the Adjutant answered. He had the valuable capacity of immediately becoming sober when matters touched the service, however much he might have drunk previously. "A most banal note."

He picked up from the table and read a note written on a fragment of paper in a large childish handwriting: "I ask that no one be blamed for my death. I have had enough of life. It is too dull."

"He has had enough of life at nineteen," said Drevenitz,—“I don't undersand the young people of today. Did he have some unfortunate love affair or was he ill?"

"No," the Adjutant said coldly, "he had nothing of that kind. He simply must have been drunk."

"They are weak, these youngsters. We must send a wire to his mother."

"I think, Baron," said Prince Repnin, "that it would be better if I went personally. She lives not far from here. She is a lonely widow, he was her only son. . . . What a blow for the mother! The news must be broken gently. I will see that rooms are made ready for her at our house. She will feel better with the Princess in our family circle."

"Yes, thank you, Prince," Drevenitz said and addressed the Adjutant: "Well, Vladimir Stanislavovitch, I suppose that I shall have to stay here?"

The Adjutant guessed the thoughts of his Commander.

"No, Your Excellency, it is Saturday, and the funeral can't

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take place before Monday. The reports are already being prepared, you can sign them in an hour's time and then leave. Lieutenant Kisloff will take down the evidence, but it will be a mere formality. The case is quite clear. I am sending for a wreath from the regiment, the priest has been notified and a wagon has been dispatched for the coffin. It's an ordinary matter. There is no necessity for you to stay here."

Drevenitz became reassured. The matter was really an ordinary one. Not a single year passed without cases of suicide in the army. The reasons differed. It was either a large loss of money at cards, or the lack of means for the expensive life in the regiment, illness, an unfortunate love affair, a quarrel with comrades, or simply the dullness of the life. Everyone knew what had to be done in such cases. The suicide of officers formed part of the army life, the measures to be taken were laid down in the regulations.

Drevenitz left the cottage. Prince Repnin and the Adjutant followed him. Steepochka Vorobieff was bustling about on the stoop and was giving instructions.

"Can it really be that there was no reason at all? Alexander Vassilievitch, go and get ribbons of the regimental colours for the wreath. What was his father's name? We always called him Vasia and I have forgotten his patrimonial name?"

"Karlovitch," said Sablin who was standing in the group of officers.

"Was he Orthodox or Lutheran?" Steepochka asked.

"Orthodox."

"See that N.C.O. sentries are posted. As soon as Kisloff finishes taking down the evidence it will be necessary to wipe away the blood and to open the windows. His mother may arrive soon. He must be dressed."

Sablin passed the officers who were standing outside and entered the cottage. There was a smell of gunpowder mixed with a disagreeable odour of human blood. The only man in the cottage except the deceased was his orderly, the soldier Bardsky. He stood in a corner and wiped with his dirty fists the large tears that trickled down his cheeks.

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Sablin looked at the white, calm and indifferent features of the dead, then at the orderly and asked:

"Pavel, how did it happen? Were you here?"

"Yes," the orderly exclaimed with despair. "Almost before my eyes, Your Honour. If I had only known what he meant to do, but the idea never entered my head. What shall I tell the old lady now? She spoke to me so kindly about His Honour. 'Have you a son?' she asked me. I have a tiny one, he was six months old when I left for the service. 'He is also my only one,' she told me,—'take care of him.' And I haven't!"

"Was he depressed lately?"

"No, Your Honour. He was quite merry looking lately. To-day he returned, as I could see, slightly drunk. He began to write something and took off his tunic. When he finished.—'Pavel,' he said, 'give me my revolver.' Could I know why he wanted it? I thought he was going to practise shooting at a card pinned to the ceiling as he often did when he had drunk a little. I gave it to him. 'Now,' he said,—'go away.' Somehow I felt queer. I obeyed but stopped in the next room and listened. I heard a dull thud. It didn't even seem like a revolver report. But then I heard him groaning and ran into the room. He sat on the bed and blood poured from his breast on his breeches and the floor. He looked at me quietly and said: 'Save me. I didn't want to. It was so dull, all . . . so dull.' I wanted to support him but he fell on the pillow. I ran for the medical assistant and on the way told a soldier to report to the orderly officer. He was still breathing when we ran in with Sentzoff. Sentzoff took his hand. His Honour lay with closed eyes and said quietly: 'Ah, how dull it all is! Save me! I didn't want to!' Then—'it is dull. . . .' He called his mother's name twice and died."

Tears trickled down the orderly's face. Sablin looked at Baron Korff's calm features and strange thoughts suddenly came to him. He turned and left the cottage. A gust of cold wind with rain met him outside. The prints of horses' hoofs on the earthen road were already filled with water.

Rotbek lay undressed and wrapped in a blanket in the cot-



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tage where Sablin lived. He was sleeping soundly. A bottle of soda water and a glass of strong tea stood on a chair near the bed. Rotbek's orderly knew what His Honour needed on such occasions.

The cottage was dark and damp. Sablin approached the window and sat down on a chair. In front of the window a wet willow tree was swaying in the wind. Large drops of rain pattered on the pools of water and raised bubbles which burst immediately. No one was to be seen on the road and the whole street seemed deserted and uninhabited. Suddenly Sablin was seized by the same anguishing, unbearable feeling of depression which had brought Baron Korff to his sad end. He understood Korff.

He must have returned in the same way to his cottage, looked at the muddy street, the grey sky, the rain, the bubbles on the pools, thought of a grey muddy field, of long rows of soldiers' backs, wet horses' croups bespattered with mud and far ahead the raised sword of the regimental Commander. He must have realized that this would go on forever. This field, these rows of men and the form with the raised sword would always exist. And whatever might happen in the world, however happy, sad or full of love his heart might be, a sign of the Commander's sword would continue to throw him from one end of the manoeuvre ground to the other. Today and tomorrow, and in one, ten, twenty years of time.

For the first time Sablin felt how dull the life in the regiment was. The interests of all were concentrated either on the details of drill or on society gossip. He had met a young girl who had new and different ideas of life, with whom it was so nice to talk. But he had not managed to keep her. He had offended her because he was accustomed to the idea that all women were accessible, and as a result she had left him. What remained? Regimental interests, drill and poles for keeping direction on the manoeuvre ground.

How dull!

Perhaps Baron Korff was right? His face was so serenely calm. As if during the last moments of his life he had heard

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something important and encouraging. Life had existed and it had been blown out. Quite simply. A shot, so quiet that the orderly hardly heard it in the next room. The body still suffers, implores one to save it and calls for its mother, while the soul already knows something great and important which leaves a stamp of serene calm on the features.

Why shouldn't he, Sasha Sablin, also attempt to step over the line which separates this world from the unseen?

He felt chilled in the silent cottage. Rotbek snored, lying in an uncomfortable position on his back. The willow swayed in the wind. Dusk had fallen and a clear long northern night was approaching.

"I can come to Heaven knows what conclusions in this manner," thought Sablin. He put on his wet cap and raincoat and walked towards the Officers' Mess.

### XLVII

THE traces of the preceding revelry had been removed from the dining hall of the Mess. The wet table cloths had been replaced by fresh ones, the glasses, plates and bottles stood in the usual order. Only the strong odour of spilt champagne and tobacco smoke still remained. Candles burned in a candle-stick on one end of the table and a hanging lamp lit the other corner. Gritzenko, Matzneff and Kisloff, who had just finished the inquiry, were sitting there. Gritzenko had become quite sober and hungry and was eating a large beefsteaf and drinking red wine. Matzneff was dipping strawberries in a large glass of white wine and sucking them with a melancholy look on his face. Sablin wanted company and sat down near them.

They talked about the suicide.

"In my opinion," Gritzenko was saying, "suicide is a sign of cowardice and of lack of will. It is an act which is unworthy of a man and all the more so of an officer. I have a deep contempt for suicides."

"But you have to admit, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Kisloff, "that there may be circumstances when you have to put an end to your existence. When 'l'honneur oblige.'"

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"There can be no such reasons," said Gritzenko.

"Supposing you were hit on the face and were unable to wipe away the offense by blood."

Gritzenko stared at him.

"I would like to see the fellow who would hit me and get away alive or without being compelled to answer for it in a duel."

"Well, supposing a soldier hit you."

"I don't even admit the thought of such a possibility. I would shoot such a scoundrel."

"Someone hit you in a crowd and ran away."

"Well that . . . it's like being bitten by a mad dog. It isn't insulting."

"All right. Supposing you lost at cards and couldn't pay your debt."

"I would leave the regiment and go and work until I could pay the money back."

"Would it be worth while leading such a galley-slave's life?"

"Ah, my dear! That's just the very point. Life is harder than death and for that reason a manly individual will never shoot himself. Only a coward commits suicide."

"Well . . . all right . . . but love?" asked Kisloff.

"Less than anything else. This illness is cured more easily than any other. Only a madman can love and shoot himself for this reason. Only the Germans who have beer instead of blood in their veins are capable of it."

"But there must have been some reason for Korff's action," said Sablin.

"That's what we are talking about. He did it just because he was drunk and was a coward," said Gritzenko.

"How can you talk in such a way about a dead man who lies not far from here," said Sablin indignantly.

"He lies there and hears nothing. He doesn't exist any longer. Or you think that he may enter the room and ask me to account for my words? Ah! It's all nonsense. He only made a mess with his blood on the floor, filled the room with smoke and made a lot of noise. Just because he felt dull! Because he

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found life difficult. As if he wanted us to mess about with him, bury him and take down evidence. Stupid boy!"

"Pavel Ivanovitch!" exclaimed Sablin.

"No, Sasha, he is right,"—said Matzneff. "There was nothing beautiful in his action. No esthetic feeling, no pose. He came home drunk. Everybody saw the amount of vodka he had absorbed. Well, he got a headache, went home and then—shot himself! Sasha, why?"

"He felt dull," said Sablin.

"And don't we feel dull? A man has been created an intelligent animal for the purpose of making his life interesting. But why should it be dull? The feast of life is in full swing and the place we have at its table really isn't a bad one. He was nineteen. Dear Sasha, it would have been worth while living just for that reason alone. Think of all the pleasures of life! Women, flowers, poetry, painting, dancing, books, philosophy. . . . You just have to take what you want. I partly agree with Pavel Ivanovitch that a suicide is a man who has no will and isn't bold enough to look straight into the eyes of life."

"And looks into the eyes of death,"—said Sablin.—"He looks into the eyes of death, which he doesn't know and fears life which he knows. Which is more terrible then?"

"Life," Matzneff and Gritzenko answered simultaneously.

"You, who see so many pleasures in life and yet hold such an opinion . . ." said Sablin.

"Yes, dear Sasha," said Matzneff.

"I say this, I—an Epicurean and a cynic. I fear diseases and yet I live. I fear scandals, insults, and I live. You know Sasha, I fear and I hate riding, I am fed up with the drill and yet I live and move about at a sign from our Baron. Days and weeks pass thus while the pleasures of the feast of life are measured only by moments. Old age is ahead. Many dull days. I don't speak of family life. I have been unlucky in it. Think of the many years of suffering that are in store for me whereas I could hope to make a discovery in a single moment."

"What if you should be met by hell and horned and tailed

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demons, and by cauldrons in which sinners are boiled," laughed Gritzenko.

"No, it is impossible to invent anything worse than life," Matzneff said, sucking a strawberry,—“but at the same time there is nothing better. For instance how beautiful are these strawberries in Rhine wine! How beautiful and poetical is the wine itself! Ah! Damn it! What's the use of thinking about it at all! This Korff is a fool and a beast. If ever you feel sad and get such thoughts, Sasha, you come to me. We will read together ‘Ars Amandi.’ But you, little idiot, don't even know Latin. Well, I will translate. They knew how to live, those Romans.”

Sablin listened to their conversation and wondered at the way their thoughts leapt from topic to topic, approaching the very edge of the precipice and jumping away from it, either by a coarse jest of Gritzenko or a philosophical conclusion of Matzneff.

But he felt better with them. They were living men. Their eyes shone, they drank wine, they held death in contempt and they did not fear it.

They left the Mess about midnight and Sablin went home. He had to pass the cottage where Korff was lying. Light shone through the drawn curtains of the windows. Sablin felt a desire to look once more at the dead man. He entered the cottage. Baron Korff, important and majestic looking, lay in a white coffin. He was clad in his parade uniform and his white hands were folded on his breast. High candles burned dimly. Flowers lay near the coffin. Two tall N.C.O. sentries with rifles slung behind their backs and with drawn sabres stood motionless on either side of the coffin. A little, grey-haired lady in a black dress sat on the bed on which he had shot himself. Her head was shaking. She was weeping.

She was Korff's mother.

Everything was quiet in the cottage. Why hadn't Korff thought of this old lady when he had asked for his revolver? Why?

Again, as after Hodinka, Sablin's soul felt indignant against



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God. Why should this old solitary being have to endure such sufferings?

Sablin quietly left the room.

At home he found Rotbek who had just waked up. He was drinking tea, looked at Sablin with dazed eyes and said:

"You know, Sasha, I'll beat that General Pouff yet! Not now but another time!"

He knew nothing about Korff's suicide. He had understood nothing at the Mess and had slept continuously since.

### XLVIII

MAROUSIA wrote a letter to Sablin: "I have heard," write Marousia, "that the public will be admitted by special tickets to the Ceremonial Last Post and the concert that will follow it. Please get me a ticket and leave it at the Martoffs' house if that won't mean too much trouble for you. I shall feel most grateful. Afterwards we can exchange impressions and talk them over."

"She has forgiven me!" Sablin exclaimed as he read the note. He would meet her after the Ceremonial Last Post and make everything clear. It wasn't difficult for him to obtain a ticket and Sablin passed in a state of happy expectation the fortnight which separated him from the day appointed for the Imperial Inspection of the Camps and for the Ceremonial Last Post.

The morning of that day was a foggy one, but already at ten o'clock the sun shone brightly and the clay of the muddy roads quickly began to dry. The evening promised to be magnificent.

Where the Tzarskoie Selo road crosses the main line of the camps, near the church on the left flank of the Semenovskiy regiment, a wooden platform had been erected for the musicians and next to it a smaller one for the public. A large tent had been pitched near the edge of the birch grove on a mound which had been covered with sod and flowers. Near by was a small enclosure surrounded by a rope fence and intended for a select public. Only persons in the possession of special crimson tickets were admitted here. Sablin had obtained one for Marousia.

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Towards six o'clock in the evening the platforms were already covered with spectators. The guests were arriving in troikas, in private carriages, in cabs and on foot. The light colours of the sunshades and the dresses of the ladies gave a cheerful appearance to the platform and concealed the rough boards and the earth on which the chairs and benches were placed. The pathways had been swept and covered with red sand. At the doors of the tent stood two slim, tall Cadets, sentries of the Pavlovsky Military School, handsome as cherubs. The musicians and bandsmen of all the regiments of the camp, more than a thousand men in all, were occupying their platform. Their brightly polished brass instrument sparkled in the sun. An army of drummers and buglers were lining up in front headed by an aged drummer of the Guard Grenadiers,—a broad shouldered, middle sized soldier with a black beard tinged with grey,—a typical Russian peasant.

The officers of the Guard regiments arrived as the Emperor finished the inspection of their units and placed themselves in the order of their regiments before the Emperor's tent.

Marousia looked at the sky with the clouds moving towards the sunset, at the wide spaces of the fields and the dark Strelna and Ligovo woods and at the sparkling stripe of the Finnish Gulf into which the purple sun was slowly descending.

Next to Marousia sat the popular Russian artist Varlamoff who never missed this Ceremony.

"It is splendid—splendid!" he was repeating, wiping his bald head with a handkerchief. "How beautiful is our mother Russia! I wouldn't change our Krasnoie Selo for any Nice or Switzerland. See, how pure the air is, Kronstadt can be seen quite distinctly. The roof of the Peterhof palace is shining. . . . One feels the presence of magic water works there. . . . Do you hear? . . . Listen! . . . The Emperor is coming."

Marousia listened. A distant roar could be heard on the left and the earth seemed to tremble there. Thousands of men were shouting "hurrah" and the distant sounds aroused in Marousia feelings which she had never yet experienced. Her brother had told her that a mass hypnosis seemed to overpower all the

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men when the Emperor approached and that all united in a feeling of adoration for the Tsar. She, Marousia, would never let herself be hypnotised. What did the Emperor mean to her? But her heart gave a leap when she heard the approaching roar of voices and realised its meaning.

The noise came nearer. One could already distinguish the tunes of the Anthem and of the marches, the sharp answers to the greetings of the Emperor and the mighty Russian "hurrah." It started in the Egorsky regiment, rose in the Izmailovsky and in the artillery. . . . The Emperor appeared, mounted on a powerful bay horse and crossed the road. He wore the uniform of a Colonel of the Semenovskiy regiment. A blue St. Andrew's ribbon was slung over his shoulder. At his side in a carriage drawn by four horses drove both Empresses followed by a huge escort of officers, Generals and foreign Military Attaches.

Marousia wanted to concentrate all her attention on the Emperor but was involuntarily distracted. The beautiful steeds, the parade attires of the horsemen, the red dolomans of the hussars, a stout grey haired Cossack General in a blue cap who seemed to have been taken from a picture of Repnin, a youthful page, Guard Cossacks in dark blue "tcherkesskas," all looked to her like a fragment from the Arabian Nights or like the apotheosis of a magic ballet. It didn't seem to be part of real life, because simple life, the green fields and hills of Krasnoie Selo formed a contrast with this brilliant procession and this roar of voices which drowned the music of the band. It seemed to be an event coming from another sphere, from a different world.

The Emperor rode to the end of the Camps and returned at a gallop, the escort following him. He dismounted, looked 'round the spectators, bowed to the acclamations of the crowd, turned 'round and greeted the musicians. He then ascended the steps leading to his tent and talked, smiling, to the persons of his Suite who met him there. He lit a cigarette and entered the tent. Marousia could see him distinctly. Not more than twenty feet separated her from the Emperor. She could see the simple

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face with the slightly upturned nose, the long moustache, the little beard and round white hands. The Empress stood near the tent holding with one hand the back of a chair and with the other nervously drawing something, with a sunshade, on the sand. Marousia noted with interest every human gesture of the Emperor and of the Empress, the way he threw the cigarette stump into the flowers, how he took the chin of the little Grand Duchess and talked to her and the way he spoke to his sister Olga Alexandrovna.

"It is all quite ordinary and human, almost banal," she thought but her heart beat more quickly when she looked at the surroundings of the tent. Slim Cossacks in long blue tcherkesskas with silver embroidery silently, with catlike movements, paced to and fro in their soft, heelless boots. The two Cadets stood like motionless statues before the tent. Their features were so alike that they appeared to be brothers. Flushed, sun-burnt, with just the shadow of an appearing moustache, they stood rigidly motionless, presenting arms, and it seemed as if they did not even breathe.

The orchestra played piece after piece but the Cadets never moved and strain and emotion were reflected on their features. The Suite stood around, brilliant officers stood in a quadrangle before the tent and Sablin was in their midst. Marousia knew that, but she felt that Sablin, the Cadets and everything else were obliterated by the Emperor's presence. In olden days the Moscow Tsars must have appeared in the same way surrounded by their boyars and rinds. This ceremonial beauty had come from the east, from Byzantium, it had separated the Tsar from the people, had made him mysterious and created the legend that the Tsar was chosen by God himself. Should the Cadets move, should they let fall their rifles, the legend would vanish and no one would believe the Tsar a superior creature—that he came from God.

The musicians continue to play; the sun sinks lower and lower; one can already look at its huge disk of fire; but the Cadet sentries continue to stand motionless and their faces seem to be frozen in affectionate admiration for their sovereign.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

### XLIX

THE orchestra finished playing. The old drummer came forward, and with him a tall bugler. They halted and stood at attention before the Emperor. For twenty-five years this old drummer had read the prayer on the day of the Ceremonial Last Post and yet he always felt nervous. He deeply believed that he read the prayer before the Tsar anointed by God.

Complete silence reigned around. Conversation ceased. All waited for something. Marousia saw large tears of emotion trickling down the cheeks of her neighbour Varlamoff. Against her will she also was feeling moved.

A rocket rose into the air and burst with white smoke somewhere in the blue sky. A second, then a third followed. And suddenly the general salvo of all the guns of the Guard batteries in the main camps boomed forth and made everyone start. It was answered by a similar salvo of the batteries of the neighbouring camps and the echo rolled towards Duderhof and Kirchhof.

When it had died away the orchestra and all the drummers played the infantry Last Post.

At moments the rolling roar of the drums drowned everything else, then it suddenly stopped and the sound of the trumpets rang out, singing a strange war song which spoke of old days and of the glory of dying for the motherland. Both sorrow and happiness were in these sounds.

The officers and the musicians stood motionless. Marousia looked at the Emperor. He also was standing at attention and did not move.

The drummer raised his sticks over his drum and the bugler applied the gold bugle to his lips. The short sharp signal "for the prayer" rang out and died away, solitary and imperative.

"Musicians, drummers and buglers, for the prayer! Caps . . . off!"

All the heads were bared. The Cadets placed their rifles in the position "for prayer" and took off their caps. Marousia



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saw the Emperor take off his cap at the order of the old drummer. His face became serious.

"Symbols," thought Marousia, "but what deep symbols!"

The face of the drummer was again turned towards the Tsar. He seemed inspired by the grandeur of the moment. The red rays of the sinking sun lit him, the aged Russian peasant soldier, and the young tall Preobrajensky bugler, and surrounded them with a halo of fire.

"Our Father!" came in a short appeal from the lips of the drummer,—*"which art in Heaven. . . ."*

The sky listened to this prayer. The sun seemed to stop its movement and spread in liquid fire behind Krasnoie Selo.

"Thy Kingdom come," the drummer was saying, "thy will be done."

All were silent. Every sigh could be heard here and all around in the distance the Camps hummed with soldier voices. The companies were singing the prayer.

"And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

The drummer read the prayer simply, pronouncing each word distinctly, but it seemed that a great sacrament was being accomplished. The Tsar was praying with his soldiers.

The old drummer said the last words, without haste covered his head with his cap, looked at the bugler and beat the signal "recall."

At his order all put on their caps. The Last Post was ended.

The Emperor put on his cap with a blue band, and descended from the mound. The sergeants of the companies, batteries, squadrons and sotnias which bore his name detached themselves from the platform of the musicians and began to come up one by one to the Emperor accompanied by the Adjutants of their units.

Their short answers were heard in the cool evening air and in the nervous tones of the voices Marousia felt that something great was happening here, of which they would speak with reverence for the rest of their lives.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

### L

FOR some time Sablin could not find Marousia from where he stood. He already began to feel anxious. Could it be that she had not come?

"Look, Pavel Ivanovitch, what a pretty girl is sitting next to Varlamoff. Do you know who she is?" said Matzneff addressing Gritzenko.

Sablin looked and saw Marousia.

"I don't know. It's the first time I've seen her. She is wonderfully beautiful. Perhaps she is a Cossack lady. There were many marriages among them this winter."

"No, she doesn't look like one. . . . There is something peculiar about her. Can't she be Samsonova?"

"No, Samsonova is there with Zabotareva and Miller. No, she isn't a regimental lady, see how gentle she looks."

This was said about Marousia and Sablin was pleased to hear it. He was glad to realise that he alone knew who she was and that perhaps she had come because of him.

He stayed behind, waited until the officers had left and then found Marousia in the crowd.

They went on foot towards the station.

The crowd hurried past them. On the road to the left files of *izvostchiks* rolled towards the railway. They did not want to speak before so many strangers. Each was deep in thought.

"Maria Mihailovna," said Sablin when they came out of the car and descended the steps of the Baltic station at Petersburg,—"may I ask you to go for a stroll along the quay if you are not too tired and not in a hurry."

"With pleasure," said Marousia.

They drove as far as the square of the Senate and there Sablin dismissed the *izvostchik*.

The summer evening twilight was ebbing away. It was growing dark. The moon had not yet appeared and the Neva stretched before them in a wide white space. The green and red lights of steamers moved in all directions. The quay was deserted.

## TO RED FLAG

"Well, what are your impressions?" Sablin asked.

Marousia turned her head towards him. She was in the same simple straw hat she had worn at Lahta.

"I haven't quite finished summing them up yet," she said,—  
"I still keep my old opinion that he is a human just as we all are. Apparently he is kind, cheerful, doesn't like to pose, but there is something thrilling in his surroundings."

They kept silent. He could say nothing. Their hearts did not beat in harmony on that point. Sablin felt that there was criticism and analysis here and he feared to approach such topics with criticism.

"I think that emotion and enthusiasm would vanish should these surroundings be removed. But I like him. I want to think of him as a human being."

The tower clock struck the time on the Petropavlovsky Cathedral. Marousia shuddered, took Sablin's arm and drew closer to him.

"How terrible it all is," she said so quietly that Sablin could hardly hear her voice. "Tell me, Alexander Nicolaievitch,—why is it impossible to reign without shedding blood? Why are prisons, gallows, whips and hard labour needed as attributes of power?"

"Because there are criminals," said Sablin.

"But is a person who thinks otherwise than you do a criminal? . . . For instance . . . I am walking with you along this beautiful granite quay, I who have received an education, who know what science and art are, who love the beauty of life, and yet I often think of the moujiks, of the miserable villages, all the thoughts of whose inhabitants are concentrated on a strife for satisfying their hunger. I feel afraid when I think of this terrible inequality among men, Alexander Nicolaievitch. Can such thoughts be considered criminal?"

"Thoughts are not punished."

"But words are. If I went to speak of this to the people in the villages, would this be a crime? Yes? Today I saw one thing which greatly impressed me. This old drummer, a simple Russian moujik, gave an order and the Tsar obeyed him. Then

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

he prayed and the Tsar prayed with him. Tell me, was this arranged on purpose? Is this a symbol of the Tsar serving the people or is it mere chance? Or have I been wrong in understanding the meaning?"

Sablin could not answer. He did not know it himself. He had never thought of it before.

"Everything has been beautiful," said Marousia, "but how can one reconcile this beauty . . . with prisons?"

"Maria Mihailovna, don't forget that the Emperor Alexander II was murdered by criminals. This murder could not have represented the desire of the people but that of a little group of men, of a party."

"But, Alexander Nicolaievitch, have the people other ways of asserting their will than through men who have consecrated themselves to serve them, that is, through the parties?"

"Did the people elect these men out of their own midst, did they empower them to murder the Emperor? As far as I remember it, the people were indignant and surprised by the horrible deed."

"We don't know the real soul of the people. It is crushed down. Can the people freely express their will, their approval or their condemnation under the regime of police pressure which exists all over Russia? Alexander Nicolaievitch, the people are 'dark.' You cannot imagine how 'dark,' hungry and ignorant they are. They must be taught and educated. All the intellectual classes should go into the villages, you, the officers, should teach the soldiers; all should begin to work."

"You are quite right," Sablin agreed. He walked without looking at Marousia and only listened to her. The more she spoke, the more he felt her to be distant from him. A wall seemed to rise between them and his heart grew cold. She understood that she had gone too far and questioned herself.—"Do I really believe in what I say? Do I believe that general and practical education would make the people happy? Do I really want this handsome and noble looking Emperor, who knows how to use all this Byzantine splendour, by whose one word men are made happy and recollect with pleasure that one

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word during the rest of their lives,—do I really want him to be murdered! And that in his place good, clever Korjikoff should rule the country in the capacity of president, untidy, ill-dressed, but full of self-denying love for his people?”

She smiled at the thought. But she did not want to give up what she had begun and she decided to make a new attempt. They came to the Fontanka and turned back. The summer evening twilight spread over the water which glimmered like silver brocade. A crowd of people poured out of a steamer which had come from the islands. It spread over the quay, another crowd hurried towards the steamer. For some time they were surrounded by strangers and did not speak. During these moments of silence she wished to dispell the cold that had arisen between them and to remove the impression her words had produced. She drew closer to him. “How dear and noble he is!” she thought,—“his views are entirely different, he is probably angry with me and yet he is so reserved and correct!”

“Alexander Nicolaievitch, what if the Tsar should leave his palace, his brilliant Court, should disguise himself as a simple moujik and should go into the country, work in some village and study the woes of the peasants? He could promote wide reforms after that. A Tsar who knows out of his own experience what is needed by the peasants would give it himself and then there would be no necessity for parties,” said Marousia.

“Then the Tsar would cease to be a Tsar. A Tsar cannot be human. The people would not obey or understand such a Tsar. They would not listen to him and would not do their duty.”

Marousia did not answer, and only sighed.

“God,” quietly continued Sablin, “sent to the earth his son Jesus Christ, who was also God. God appeared on the earth as an ordinary man and went among other ordinary men to preach his sacred teaching. The people didn’t accept it and murdered him—crucified him. But if Christ had appeared in all his glory, with his angels and archangels, in the splendour of Divine robes, then the people would have obeyed as a sacred law his least order or commandment.”



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"Do you believe in it all?" Marousia asked quietly.

"In what?" Sablin replied as quietly.

"In the things that are written in the New Testament," Marousia said bending her head.

"How could I disbelieve them, . . . and you?"

"Ah, I don't know . . . I don't know! My soul is troubled. Today this prayer in the field, and before that, you, Alexander Nicolaievitch, you aroused in me feelings and new thoughts such as I had never known before."

"You don't believe in God?"

"Tell me," Marousia asked quickly, "why did Christ appear as an ordinary man and not as a God or a King. Why did he preach and not legislate, why did he teach and not order?"

"He wanted the people to accept his Commandments of their own free will, to take them into their hearts and always follow them. An order, obedience to an order wouldn't have satisfied Christ, and he chose a different way."

"You have a deep faith," said Marousia, "I can see that. Everything is so simple in your mind. Partitions are put up, shelves are made and labels attached: "God, the church, candles, ikons, devotions; the Tsar, fidelity, parades, the regiment, the uniform, the honour of the uniform, the regimental family in general. Things permitted—things not permitted. . . ."

"And with you?"

She laughed. She openly and sincerely laughed at herself.

"With me, Alexander Nicolaievitch, all is chaos. I don't know myself what I think."

"And yet you want to teach others," he said in a tone of reproach. "Can you be a teacher without knowing for certain what it is that you want to attain?"

"And if you want, if you passionately desire. . . ."

"Desire what?"

"Truth."

"And do you know it, the truth?"

"Well, a state when all shall be happy."

"But do you know what it is that would make everyone happy? Perhaps what is good for you would be bad for me."

## TO RED FLAG

"Oh, I would stand even something bad, if only you might be happy," involuntarily escaped her.

Sablin looked at her. She seemed to him to be a nice child clinging to him in anxiety and distress and seeking support. As soon as he looked at her he felt that the cold of contradiction had vanished and the instincts of a man were awakened in him. Oh! Whoever she might be, even if a criminal, he would give everything only to kiss those lips and to look into the depths of those dark velvet eyes!

They were passing the bronze statue of Peter the Great. Steamers were whistling on the river. It was growing late.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"Half past twelve," said Sablin.

"Good Heavens! How late it is! I must go home. You live in that street I believe. I want to see your house. Is it far?"

They crossed the square. The poplars of the boulevard rustled mysteriously overhead. The barracks stood dark, empty and gloomy. She felt sorry for him.

They were passing an *izvostchik*.

"Well, good-bye, Alexander Nicolaievitch, thank you very much for the great pleasure which you have given me. I shall never forget the fairy tale I saw today."

"When shall I see you again?" he asked, helping her into the carriage.

"When? I don't know. When you like. We have many things to talk about."

"Maria Mihailovna," he said simply,—*"come to visit my home. I live here in the second story. We can talk then alone. Do come."*

She wavered. He took her little, simply gloved hand.

"Maria Mihailovna, do be nice. I will show you the history of our regiment, I will show you pictures of the past and by knowing our past you will learn to understand our present. We have corresponded and argued together, we have almost quarrelled and yet we don't know why we are as we are. Do be nice. I implore you. Just for half an hour."

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

She smiled.

"What day is today?" she asked.

"Friday."

"All right. I will come just for a moment next Friday. At seven o'clock."

"Thank you, dear Maria Mihailovna. Exactly at seven I will listen for your footsteps at the threshold of my den."

"Good-bye, Alexander Nicolaievitch."

He followed her with his eyes until the carriage disappeared 'round the corner. Everything was rejoicing in his soul.

### LI

DURING every day of that week Sablin left for the town after drill. He made his flat ready alone, without the help of his orderly. He took off the summer covers from the paintings and the mirrors, wiped away the dust and hired men to wash and polish the floors. On Friday he purchased flowers, sweets, cakes, laid the table in the dining room and prepared a samovar.

Kitty and Vladia had taught him many things. And there was much vulgarity about that table piled with cakes, sweets, expensive fruits, bottles of rare wines, flowers in vases and flowers scattered over the cloth. But could Marousia understand or realise all the commonplaceness of such a bachelor reception of a woman.

Sablin waited for Marousia and wondered who she was. An artist? But an artist with such features could not have remained unknown at Petersburg. She studied at the University, she was a friend of General Martoff's daughter, her name was Lubovina, she was a very pure girl and yet she was going to visit his flat. Would Rotbek's sister do so, or Baroness Wolff whom he had seen several times at dances during that winter? The idea would never have come to him to invite them. And yet he had invited her and she had agreed to come. Why? Because she must be a woman of a different circle of society and could do it. With *them* it was allowed.

And who were *they*?

## TO RED FLAG

Was she the daughter of a merchant, or a burgess, or a child of the barracks, the daughter of an army officer?

But what did it matter? She was charming. His heart beat more quickly when he was with her, when he looked at her dear face, wished, and did not dare to think that it might be possible to kiss it.

Sablin was waiting in excitement for Marousia. He sat in an arm chair in his study and looked through the window but could not remain long in one place and began pacing the rooms.

Marousia left her izvostchik on the Gorohovaia and walked in a round-about way towards Sablin's flat. Her heart was beating quickly. She asked herself—why? She had visited Korjikoff when he helped her to master geometry. Twice she had gone to see the brother of her school-friend, a lonely student who was lying ill, during the absence of her friend. In both places she had been met as a comrade. She had not been excited then and did not even think that there was anything extraordinary in her visiting a bachelor's lodging. She went to see Fedor Fedorovitch or comrade Pavel and that was all.

She had then told her brother and her father that she went to see them, but this time she had not done so and walked stealthily towards Sablin's flat. She felt ashamed. Several times she stopped and wanted to return, but she was even more ashamed to do that. She wanted to see Sablin. She loved him. She had felt that at Lahta, when she had forgiven him, and when she wrote to him. She had felt it even more strongly during their stroll on the quay after the Ceremonial Last Post. She liked everything in him. His vague cravings, his mistakes, his elegant easy manners and quiet speeches. He was different from all the men she had ever seen.

On the boulevard she looked 'round several times, but it was almost deserted and the rare passers-by paid no attention to her. She quickly entered the house porch. The staircase was dirty and covered with rubbish, lime and paint. The doors on the ground floor were open and empty halls could be seen through them. Two workmen were painting the walls there and singing a song. Marousia ran quickly up the stairs. The bronze plates

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

on the doors seemed to swim before her eyes. She felt like fainting. At the same moment, without waiting for her bell, the door quietly opened and she saw Sablin standing before her in a well-cut tunic, breeches and top-boots.

She entered the front hall.

Sablin silently raised both her hands one after the other to his lips and kissed them. She looked into his eyes and felt that the warmth of happiness emanated from them. She blushed, and felt calmer and better.

"So this is how you live," she said, entering his study and going towards a large mirror. She had come with the purpose of staying only a moment, in the front hall she had not even wanted to take off her light cloak but here before the mirror she slowly began to take off her hat and rearrange her hair.

Marousia looked 'round the room. The heavy curtains were drawn and a large lamp was burning over the table. She was surprised not by the luxury of the furniture, different from any that she had ever seen, but by the ancient style and solidity of it. Her attention was attracted by long rows of dark portraits which hung along the walls. Marousia came up to the first one and stopped before it, her hands folded behind her back. A tanned face in a high boyar cap looked out at her from a dark background. Squinting tartar eyes, narrow and fierce, gazed fixedly from under drooping thick black eyebrows. The face was framed by a black curling beard. A thin Mongolian moustache lay in a straight line over the upper lip. Beneath it hung the portrait of a white woman with red cheeks and lips, stout and with large bulging eyes.

"These are your ancestors?" asked Marousia.

"Yes."

"Were they painted during their lifetime or later?"

"This portrait was made by a painter of Ivan the Terrible, the Byzantine Campana in 1543. It is the founder of our family, the boyar 'Ivashka Sablin'\* and beneath is his wife Maria Savishna of the family of the boyars Mstislavsky."

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\* "Sablin" in Russian means "sword."



## TO RED FLAG

Dark faces of men in "kaftans" with high collars or scarfs, in tunics, with wigs or without them, with decorations or stars, women with languid dreaming eyes, with beauty spots, handsome and ugly, were looking at her. All of them were his ancestors. Sablin knew them all. His great-grandmother had been an Italian, his grandmother a blonde Baltic German, his mother a Russian beauty.

Sablin knew the history of each. They were the nobles Sablin. They had a coat of arms, had living serfs in their possession, kept the traditions of their family and wore a sword at their side—the reason why they were called Sablins. She must also have had ancestors, only no one had ever thought of painting their portraits. She did not even have one of her father. Who was she? She did not even know that. She had heard that her grandfather had been a simple peasant, a serf, and that he had been sent by his lord to Petersburg. In the documents which she had presented at the University classes she was called a "burgess of Kronstadt."

"It would be nice," she thought, "to paint the portraits of all these peasants in shirts and sheepskins who had been beaten and whipped by the nobles Sablin and present them to him as my ancestors."

Turning away from the portraits she looked at Sablin. He stood near the lamp and his admiring gaze was fixed on Marousia. His figure expressed nobility and beauty. Suddenly she felt pleased to think that he had ancestors whose portraits had been painted.

She approached the table. A richly bound book, "the history of the regiment" lay under the lamp.

She sat down in a large comfortable arm chair. He settled near her and she began to look through the book. It also was full of portraits of ancestors. Old, pretentious uniforms, drawings of colours and standards, pictures of cavalry charges and encounters, portraits of hero officers looked at her from the pages of the book. Men had died on the field of battle and the descendants wrote down their deeds and drew up lists of their names. Drop by drop, as a building is built up brick after brick,

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

the complex traditions of the unit were created and at their foundation lay limitless fidelity to the Emperor.

Fedor Fedorovitch says: "It is necessary to break the allegiance of the army," Victor is right—it can't be done. What could Marousia do when she herself was impressed by these ancestors, by the history of battles and great deeds and by the portraits of heroes. Yes, Sablin is right, he knows what he wants and what aims he pursues. He moves along the same road which had been opened and trodden by his ancestors. And she? Among a wild grove of thoughts chaotically thrown together and where learned thinkers had placed hardly noticeable guide posts. Men had tried to open roads along these posts—and perished at the task. The revolutionary parties revered their names, but would there ever come a time when their names would be openly quoted and their portraits printed? What could Marousia do when she herself wavered and did not know on whose side the truth was? And if truth was on the side of Fedor Fedorovitch, beauty most certainly was on that of Sablin.

And wasn't beauty equal to power?

"May I offer you tea?" Sablin interrupted her thoughts. She rose and went with him to the dining room.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch, what does all this mean? You ought to be ashamed," she said looking at the table. And at the same time she felt pleased. He must love her if he tried to show it even in such ways.

"Would you like to have some champagne?"

"Shall I own," thought Marousia, "that I have never tasted champagne and have only read about it in books?" But she said:

"All right. Just a little. Only a drop. Let's go to your study. It is much cosier there . . . under the chaperonage of your ancestors."

Sablin brought a dish of peaches, which also she had never tasted, sweets and wine. They settled in arm chairs opposite each other. A little table with wine and fruit separated them.

"Will you allow me to smoke?" asked Sablin.

Marousia drank champagne in little gulps. The white bub-

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bles of the liquid remained on her upper lip and she playfully licked them away. Blood was throbbing in Sablin's temples. But the deep blue eyes were looking at him with such confidence and with such naïve purity that he did not dare to move.

"Now, Maria Mihailovna," said Sablin, "now you know who I am. You know the histories of our family and of our famous regiment. I would like to know who you are, beautiful enchantress. Reveal your incognito to me and . . . let us be friends!"

Marousia looked at him as he sat slightly reclining in his arm chair with one leg over the other, slowly and carelessly smoking his cigarette. Every movement bore a stamp of noble laziness.

"My Prince!" she thought.

### LII

A SHORT silence, and then Marousia spoke:

"Why do you want to know who I am and who my ancestors are. I too have had ancestors. But let me remain for you what I have been—an unknown acquaintance. We are both seeking for truth. Each of us has a different understanding of it and neither of us has found it. I desire the happiness of the whole world. I would like to love all mankind, while you acknowledge only a little part of the terrestrial globe. My heart is broader than yours. We have met in discussion and have become interested in each other. We have been bound together by admiration of the same idol—beauty. You worship it and are proud of the fact, while I consider it a weakness, almost a vice. . . . You have shown me a fairy tale of this world. A fairy tale about the Tsar and his kingdom. I know a different fairy tale. Some day, not now, I will tell it to you. You wouldn't understand it now. But let me remain unknown to you like Cinderella at the ball of the prince."

"But the prince found out who Cinderella was by the slipper she lost."

"Find out," Marousia said laughing, and slightly showed her little foot from under her long skirt. It was clad in an old and much worn shoe and stocking but she could be proud of it. A

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

light appeared in Sablin's eyes. "What" he thought, "if the old shoe, this good but modest dress are only a masquerade? What if she is quite different in her private life from what she seemed to be at the Martoffs? If she was so beautiful in this humble attire, how lovely she must be in transparent silk stockings and light patent leather shoes." He was facing a mystery and it excited him. She was Russian—that was evident from her beautiful and correct speech; she was clever, educated, tactful. She did not drink, but just played with the champagne, she did not eat the sweets. She took only one—evidently it could not be a rarity to her. "What if she is one of those aristocrats who, tired of society pleasures, sought stronger emotions?" Sablin smiled at his thought—"to be tired and to seek something new at nineteen!"

"Stop thinking about it," said Marousia. "You have offered me your friendship. I am deeply touched by your offer and I believe that it is quite sincere. I accept it. Let us be friends. I see you have many books the existence of which I never suspected. Show me those little books over there. The cavalry regulations! What funny pictures. I did not know that you had to study every gesture and every movement. The music of the signals! What strange words! What do they mean? Dear Alexander Nicolaievitch, this is quite a new world that opens before me. I never suspected that what appeared to us so silly when we met regiments in the streets is in reality so serious and of such importance. The science of war. Shall we really have war again?"

Did he listen to her or not? He admired her, the movements of her lips and the change of colour on her cheeks. She continued to speak. Instinctively she felt that her defense lay in conversation. She had either to leave or talk seriously, look at books and do something. Otherwise these strong arms would be stretched towards her and hungry lips would kiss her. What would she do then?

"Oh!" she suddenly exclaimed interrupting herself, "I came for just a moment only to look at your den and I have stayed for more than two hours."

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She rose.

"Good-bye. I must go."

"When shall I see you? I hope here?"

"Why not?" she thought, "it has been so nice and cosy. He is noble, honest; and I also know how to behave."

"All right. Next week. Again on Friday. But only just for a moment. I will bring you back your books."

Marousia shook his hand and quickly ran down the dark stairs. The bang of the outer doors was heard and Sablin remained alone with his cakes, sweets, fruit and wine. "What shall I do with it all?" he thought. "I will take it to Rotbek. He likes sweet things."

### LIII

EVERY Friday Marousia came to Sablin at seven o'clock in the evening. They read together, he played on the piano, sang to her, sometimes she sang too. The study was warm and was plunged in twilight, the samovar hummed in the dining room. They were alone. Sometimes, on bad days in autumn when rain poured outside and wood crackled in a brightly burning fire in the study, they sat side by side and looked at the fire. Marousia felt better when she was with him, but Sablin suffered. He desired Marousia. He no longer looked at her as at something sacred but he still knew that she was inaccessible.

A man loves with his eyes, a woman loves with her ears. Sablin knew that and he captivated Marousia by his conversation and singing. He kissed her hands and she laughed. Once during her fifth visit she was sitting at the piano. He came up to her from behind and kissed her neck. She began to cry. Had she pushed him aside in indignation, had she risen and left as she had done at Lahta, she would have been saved, but she began to cry and was lost.

He knelt before her, began to implore her not to be angry with him, kissed her hands and drew her closer to him. He told her how unhappy he was, how he loved her and how hard it was for him to feel that she did not love him at all.

That was untrue! She loved him, deeply loved him. To



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

prove this, to show him that she was no longer angry, she quietly kissed him on the forehead. They parted as friends and when she came to him on the next Friday he kissed her cheek and she answered him by a similar kiss. As if they were brother and sister.

A pure girl who has never known passion does not crave it and if she surrenders to a man it is almost always because of a feeling of pity for him. Pity is a most dangerous feeling for a girl and Sablin managed to make Marousia pity him and consider herself responsible for his sufferings.

Marousia saw that he suffered. He was burning with passion. He had grown thinner and his eyes seemed larger and darker.

It was a quiet November evening. She had stayed longer than usual. It was hard to leave him, so lonely and . . . so ill. His head was burning hot. Probably he had fever.

"No, Maria Mihailovna," Sablin was telling her, "you are cruel. Don't you see how I suffer? I am ready to die. Death would perhaps be better than such torture."

"What do you want me to do?" Marousia asked with an imploring note in her voice. She wanted so for him to be happy.

"Kiss me."

They were sitting in arm chairs opposite each other.

"If that will help you," she said rising, coming up to him and bending to his lips. He clasped her round the waist and she found herself on his knees. He kissed her lips. The large grey eyes were near to hers.

"Is this love? Pity me!" she said with quiet reproach.

But he did not hear her words.

### LIV

THIS love was her torture. All the meaning of their meeting was now reduced to one moment of fire for which Sablin waited with burning eyes. She felt poignant shame, cried, implored him not to torture her, but on seeing his happiness grew quieter and kissed him. Their conversations, singing, discussions on elevated topics were now forgotten.

## TO RED FLAG

She could not abstain from coming, feeling how he waited for her. She did not want him to suffer, and preferred to suffer and sacrifice herself. And Marousia continued to visit him, not noticing that she could no longer answer his passion by passion, that she grew cold and irritated him by her coldness.

It was one o'clock at night. Cold winter weather was outside. Thick snow had just fallen and because of that everything seemed particularly quiet in the flat and in the bedroom where a large lamp was burning.

Suddenly a sharp ring at the kitchen door was heard. Who could it be? The orderly had been sent away to the squadron and could not return before morning. Someone not only rang the bell but banged his fists on the door. The noise could be heard in the next kitchen. Sablin jumped up, dressed hurriedly and stealthily walking in his stockings came up to the door. He heard someone pulling at the bell and shouting in a gruff soldier voice:

"Sherstobitoff, you devil! Open! Orders for His Honour!"

"Who is there?" asked Sablin.

"Orderly from the office, Your Honour, orders, general alarm is given. The regiment is lining up . . . A mutiny in the town!"

Sablin hesitated no longer, unbolted and opened the door.

A middle-sized soldier rushed upon him, seized him by the shirt and pulled him into the interior of the flat.

"Speak, Your Honour, where is my sister!" he heard a hoarse, gasping voice say as they passed struggling through the dining room and staggered into the study. Sablin recognised Lubovin.

Marousia, half dressed, ran out at the noise of the struggle. Lubovin saw her.

"Ah!" he shouted with fury.—"Then it is true! Ah you. . . ."

A collection of arms hung on the wall near by, and beneath it Sablin's revolver. Lubovin seized it and aimed at Sablin.

"Scoundrel, Your Honour, villain! Scoundrel!"

Without looking he fired and rushed out of the flat.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

A cloud of smoke blotted Sablin out of his sight for a moment and it seemed to him that Sablin staggered and fell.

Marousia looked at Sablin, her features distorted with despair and pain. She ran to him, stretching her hands towards him.

"Sasha, you are not wounded? You are not hurt?" She did not think of herself or of the insult which her brother had directed at her. She thought only of him. If only he was unhurt! Sablin looked at her with troubled, wandering eyes. He was pale and at a loss what to do. Terrible thoughts rushed in a hurricane through his mind. He looked at the thin, pale girl. He did not need her love any longer. The fairy tale was ended. She was the sister of a soldier, she belonged to the same class of people as Kitty and Vladia, she had just been looking for an adventure, for her first. Others would come.

He had created a magic dream out of her mysterious incognito, he had believed that she was a Cinderella. . . . She was simply a nice looking girl and nothing more. But now he must save her and himself. Heaven only knows what Lubovin might do or shout downstairs? The shot also might have been heard on the staircase. People might come and put questions at any moment. She must disappear immediately for her own sake and for his. And afterwards, even should Lubovin give an oath that he had seen Marousia, he would have to swear that no one had been in his flat. This would be demanded by his duty to a woman, and all the more so to a young girl.

"Marousia, for Heaven's sake go! People may come in any moment!" he said.

"Yes, yes, but you? Are you unhurt? The bullet didn't touch you?"

"No, no. . . . Here is your hat. You will arrange your hair afterwards."

They bustled about the room. She dressed quickly. They were both pale.

"Go, go, for God's sake!" he said pressing her hands.

"Good-bye, my dear! God keep you! I shall feel so afraid for you! What may happen even yet?"

She did not fear for herself. She was prepared for anything.

## TO RED FLAG

Long ago she had sacrificed herself to him and wanted nothing from him in exchange.

She kissed him so tenderly that his heart sank. He waited until she descended the stairs. He heard the outer door close and listened for what might happen outside. All was quiet.

He went to the bedroom, then to the dining room and quickly removed all traces of a woman's presence. He poured the water out of the samovar, returned to the dining room, cleared away the plates, laid the revolver on the table, together with screw drivers and rags, and began to wait.

All the preparations had taken not more than five minutes. But it was already high time. The electric bell rang timidly in the front room.

## LV

Lubovin was convinced that he had killed Sablin. What else could he have done? He had the right to kill. For the honour of his sister. He must immediately own the act so that everyone would understand that he had done it in a state of excitement and wrath. The jury always acquitted in such cases. Straight from Sablin's flat he ran towards the squadron barracks holding under his arm the same book of orders which he had dropped in the kitchen and picked up when rushing out. The men were sleeping soundly and snored in different tones. The lights were turned down and the orderly sergeant dozed near a table on which burned a lamp.

Lubovin ran up to him. He was pale, his eyes were wide open. He seemed drunk.

"I have killed Lieutenant Sablin," he gasped, "arrest me!"

But immediately he had said that he felt he had made an irreparable mistake. The words "Lieutenant Sablin" reminded him with pitiless clearness that he was a soldier, that he would have to appear not before the jury but before a court martial, that he would be confronted not by liberal judges who would voluptuously search in Marousia's heart and then acquit him, but by a severe officers' Court which would defend one who had belonged to their midst and would have Lubovin executed.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Lubovin realised all that when the orderly raised his sleepy eyes and muttered :

"What nonsense are you saying? Are you drunk?"

"The only thing left," thought Lubovin, "is to run." As quickly as he had entered, he rushed down the staircase, ran across the yard and dashed past the outer post. The latter noticed the book under Lubovin's arm and paid no attention to him. "An orderly must be running to the office," he thought.

Lubovin continued to run along the dark street which bordered the barracks and slackened his pace and walked calmly only when he emerged into a wide well-lit street and saw a policeman in the distance. Seeing that no one was pursuing him he decided to think over the situation. Court martial and execution rose like terrible phantoms before him. He saw a section of infantry soldiers, a white handkerchief, a priest.—"Who could save me? Only Korjikoff! He had started Marousia on this base enterprise, he had arranged it all, well, now he would have to put things straight." Lubovin knew that Korjikoff had a flat in Kirochnaia street where it reached the Tavrishesky gardens. There two months previously the party had installed a small printing press and store of army forms for the purpose of propaganda among the troops. Korjikoff lived there, interviewed the soldiers who came and in suitable cases gave them propaganda sheets and pamphlets.

The whole plant occupied three rooms. In the first was the office and the waiting room, in the second stood the press, in the third small room lived Korjikoff himself. He had a little iron bed with a torn mattress, an ill-smelling iron washstand, and a large table covered with army forms of the most innocent character. The pamphlets in a very small quantity Korjikoff kept on his person. Lubovin knew that Korjikoff worked at night and he was certain to find him at home. The main thing was to cover up his traces and to disappear for a while.

The gates of the house where Korjikoff lived were never locked. Many newspaper and printer's workmen lived there and people came in and out all night. As soon as he gently rang



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the bell, Lubovin heard soft stealthy footsteps approaching the door and Korjikoff's rasping voice.

"Who is there?"

"I, Fedor Fedorovitch,—Lubovin," Lubovin said quietly.

Korjikoff did not believe him. Leaving the chain on the door he slightly opened it and only after ascertaining that it was really Lubovin did he let him in. Korjikoff was wearing his eternal brown suit, and held a lamp in his hand.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of seeing you so late?" asked Fedor Fedorovitch carefully bolting the door and leading the guest into his room. He placed the lamp on the table, sat down on a chair and offered one to Lubovin. But he continued to stand.

"I have just killed Lieutenant Sablin," Lubovin said, gasping with excitement.

"Good. Did you kill him quite?" Korjikoff asked in an even tone as if the matter were quite an ordinary one.

"Quite," Lubovin could hardly pronounce it.

"Good. And why did you kill him?"

"Because of my sister, Fedor Fedorovitch. She was with him. I found her in his flat."

"Well, what of it? Maria Mihailovna was only doing the task entrusted to her by the party."

"This is disgusting, Fedor Fedorovitch!" Lubovin exclaimed with indignation.

"Suppose it is," Korjikoff said,—“and what will happen now? Do you think that such a romantic murder will end simply?"

"That's what I wanted to ask. I wanted your advice. What will happen now? Court martial? Execution!"

"Yes, my friend, you have killed an officer of your squadron, your direct commander. You won't get patted on the head for that."

"What must I do then?"

Korjikoff fixed his little clever eyes on Lubovin and asked:

"Are you serious about it, Victor Mihailovitch?"

"Oh, Great God, Fedor Fedorovitch?"

"How did you find that out?"

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"But she is pregnant."

"Who is?" asked Korjikoff and it seemed to Lubovin that there was a quavering note in his voice. But he did not change his attitude and continued to look frowning at Lubovin.

"Marousia."

"I didn't no-o-tice it" . . . drawled Korjikoff.—"And how did you?"

"I have been watching her for some time. Almost since the summer. When we returned from Camp I could see that she had greatly changed. She no longer went to her classes and strolled about the rooms humming songs. 'I am going to enter the Conservatory and then go on the stage,' she said, but I could see that she had thoughts which she concealed. I asked her once or twice. She only laughed at my questions but I could see that she began to be afraid of me. Well, I summoned the cook Mavra and questioned her."

"Wasn't that a rather base action," remarked Korjikoff—"it has a flavour of police supervision."

"I learned only that she always left at six o'clock on Fridays and did not sleep at home. Well, she had often done that before. We live far on the outskirts of the town and is isn't safe to return late past the factories. I knew that she stayed with her aunt. Last week we began to talk of something while she was standing and suddenly she almost fainted and I had to support her. After that I watched her face and her form—well, I understood. Only I didn't know who it was. I didn't think it was Sablin. I thought that both of them were more honest. Today I obtained leave from the sergeant. I was just coming out of the steam tramway when I saw her walking along the pavement. She wore a new hat coquettishly set on one side, and a new dress, but her face was pale and sad. I let her pass, got out of the tram and followed her. She walked for about a verst and then took an izvostchik. I took another. I could see that she was driving towards the barracks. She left the izvostchik before reaching them, made two or three detours and entered a porch. Well, it was clear that it was to Sablin that she had gone. On the first floor of that staircase is the dining hall of

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the bandsmen, opposite lives the bandmaster with his family, and on the second floor lives Rotbek on one side and he on the other. Rotbek is never at home—I knew that. So I was certain that it was Sasha. I went to the squadron and saw his orderly sitting on the bed of the soldier who was on guard. ‘What are you doing here, Sherstobitoff?’ I asked him. The scoundrel laughed. ‘He gave me a ‘fiver’ and ordered me to sleep at the barracks. A girl is coming to him. It’s so every Friday.’

“And do you know who the girl is?” The cursed slave answered only: “That’s his business and not mine.” I saw that he wouldn’t say even if he knew. After the roll call I stretched myself on my bed and began to collect my thoughts. I got up in the night, dressed myself and went to the orderly.

“I shall get into trouble,” I said, “the sergeant told me to prepare several copies of the orders at the office and I forgot to do it.” He let me go. Well, I went to his flat. I stood before the door and listened. Everything was quiet, as if there were no one inside. I think I must have stood for about two hours on the stairs. My feet began to freeze. I was at a loss what to do. “What shall I do, once I get into the flat?” I asked myself. Everything was quiet there. I even heard the clock strike twelve. I rang the bell, then banged on the door and shouted. I purposely changed my voice and cursed Sherstobitoff, summoning him to open. Well, I heard him quietly breathing on the other side of the door. At last he asked: “Who is there?” I shouted: “An orderly from the office, mutiny in the town!” He unbolted the door. He had only his shirt and breeches on. Perhaps he was alone? I threw myself upon him and pulled him into the rooms? There I saw Marousia, half dressed. . . . I don’t remember how, but at that moment I saw his plated Smith and Wesson on the wall, he must have hung it there when he returned from duty. Well, as if someone pushed my hand . . . I seized it and fired . . . well . . . he fell. . . .” Lubovin said, gasping, and sank into the chair.

“So,” Korjikoff said calmly,—“and what then?”

“Then I ran to the squadron and owned up.”

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"What!" said Korjikoff and again a kind of excitement was felt in his voice. "That was stupid of you, comrade."

"I know it, myself," said Lubovin, "only I was half mad then."

"And after that?"

"I saw the orderly didn't understand the meaning of what I told him, so I ran away,—that's how I'm here."

"And after that?"

"That's what I wanted to ask you?" Lubovin said, with despair. "It means court martial and execution."

Korjikoff rose from his chair and paced about the room. He stopped before Lubovin and said calmly: "Yes, court martial and execution. Perhaps they won't go so far as executing you. There are several points in the matter which are favourable to you. But you can't escape hard labour."

"Well, what am I to do? Tell me."

"You must disappear," Korjikoff said beginning to pace the room again.

"What do you mean?" Lubovin asked.

"I mean what I say. You can't escape execution in any case. So you shall do it yourself, right here. So that no one shall see you at it, and so that your body shan't be found. Maria Mihailovna must be saved."

Lubovin grew deathly pale. He was shivering all over. Korjikoff stood before him and looked at him fixedly and with contempt.

"Oh, you . . .!" he suddenly shouted sternly,—*"undress!"*

*"Wh-a-t?"* mumbled Lubovin.

"Undress, I tell you. Take off your great-coat. Well! You can't. . . . I'll help you. Well, quick! We must finish with it before dawn."

He helped Lubovin to take off his great-coat and threw it aside. He took his sword.

"It won't be easy to destroy this heavy thing. It must bear a number, I suppose?"

"Yes . . ." whispered Lubovin. He was pitiful to look at.

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"Take off your underclothing," Korjikoff shouted sternly. "Does it also bear governmental stamps?"

"Fedor Fedorovitch, what does all this mean? Can it be that it must happen now?" Lubovin said shaking from head to foot.

"What has to happen, Comrade?"

"Death . . ." whispered Lubovin.

Korjikoff got out underclothing, drew aside a curtain behind which hung civilian clothes and picked a suit.

"Put these on," he said. "You can take my overcoat and my hat. I will prepare you a passport for abroad. You shall go to Switzerland to the village Sommervald to comrade Varnakoff. The train leaves at six o'clock from the Warsaw station. From now on you are comrade Stanislav Letschinsky, a Pole of the Kovno government, a locksmith by profession. Eh, the cut of your hair is unpleasantly soldier-like, but that doesn't matter, your features are not those of a soldier. But you must leave today. Try to speak with a Polish accent but better still keep silent. Well, are you ready?"

"And Marousia?" asked Lubovin who had regained his composure.

Korjikoff drew himself up proudly and looked straight into Lubovin's eyes.

"Don't worry about Maria Mihailovna, she won't have to bear any shame."

"What will you do?" asked Lubovin.

"I will marry Maria Mihailovna."

"But . . . she is pregnant . . ." Lubovin said quietly.

"That's the very reason why I am going to marry her," Korjikoff said looking proudly and keenly at Lubovin.

## LVI

SABLIN rose and without hurrying went to open the door. He had already formed a plan for explaining the shot. The chief thing was to find out what Lubovin had said and where he was.

The young Lieutenant Valueff, who was orderly officer for the regiment, stood on the staircase.

"You are alive?" he asked, smiling stupidly.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"As you can see," Sablin answered. "Well, come in. What has happened? Why are you so late?"

He passed to the dining room with Valueff, got out two glasses, a bottle, and poured out wine. Purposely he placed the glasses near the revolver and the bits of oil rags and noticed the look of interest which Valueff cast at the weapon.

"Well, what is the matter?"

"Well, you see. . . . It's such a stupid affair! The sergeant Ivan Karpovitch and the orderly of the second squadron rushed in to me and reported that you had just been murdered in your flat by private Lubovin."

"Lubovin? . . . cleverly done!" Sablin said laughing,—“and so you went to ring the bell at the door of a dead man. Who would have opened it to you?"

"Yes, I hadn't thought of that. I thought the door would be open."

"Well, all right. But why did Lubovin murder me? Just for recreation? Where is he? Has that villain been seized and arrested?"

"No, that's just the trouble. He rushed in like a madman, roared that he had killed you, and disappeared. I'm d . . . d if I know where he is now. He has bolted."

"What an idiot," Sablin said, sipping his wine. "Do you like this wine? I got it through Paltoff. His brother brought it. Real Bordeaux. Well, drink. But what a funny stupid business. You see I was waiting for a girl here, and well—she did not come. I felt rather lonely and couldn't concentrate my attention on reading. I remembered that I hadn't given my orderly my revolver to clean after the last exercise and decided to clean it myself. Just as I had got ready myself the bell rang in the kitchen. I went to open it and Lubovin entered with the book of orders. He looked very queer and spoke about a mutiny. I thought he was mad. I told him to give me the book of orders, but there was nothing that concerned me in it. I asked him what it all meant and laid my hand on the revolver but so clumsily that it went off—you can see where the bullet struck the wall. It almost got me. Lubovin bolted, roaring

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something about murder. That's the whole of the stupid affair. So you say the scoundrel hasn't been found?"

"No, no. That's just the trouble, he has vanished. Well, I'm so glad. I'll go and report to the Baron, he must be anxious."

"And who told him?"

"The sergeant reported to Gritzenko and Gritzenko telephoned to the Commander. The old man is nervous."

"All right, go then. Only drink your wine. For my miraculous escape from a deadly danger!"

"Well, good night."

"Thank you. Tell the Baron that I will put in a formal report tomorrow."

"Certainly. Good night."

Sablin saw Valueff go, locked the doors and returned to his room. He undressed, stretched himself on his bed, blew the lamp out, covered his head with the blanket, and immediately Lubovin appeared before him pale and with features distorted by rage. He heard the insulting words: "Scoundrel! Villain!"

A soldier had thus cursed him, an officer. And what did he do? He continued to live, concealed the insult and lied, lied and lied!

He threw the blanket aside, opened his eyes and looked into the darkness. He thought of the Baron Korff who had committed suicide that summer at the camp and the conversation that had been held on that subject between Gritzenko, Kisloff and Matzneff. It was more difficult to live than to die, but it wasn't easy to die when life was beautiful. Last Saturday, tired of Marousia and disappointed, he had gone to the skating rink in the Tavrishesky gardens. Baroness Wolff was there with her daughters,—Vera and the Baroness Sofia who the previous year had married a wealthy landowner. They skated together, slid down the artificial hills. Vera was charming. He looked at her with other eyes than at Marousia. He had dreamed of possessing Marousia ever since their meeting at Lahta but his feelings towards Vera Constantinovna were different. In the autumn he had spent two days at their estate,

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and had hunted woodcocks with Vera Constantinovna and her father. Vera Constantinovna wore top-boots, breeches, a long grey hunting coat and a soft grey hat with a green feather. She appeared smaller and more graceful in man's clothes. Sablin, although he was in love with Marousia, could not fail to notice Vera Constantinovna's beauty. But in spite of the proximity allowed by country life, he never once thought voluptuously about her. Marousia implored him to be a comrade and friend, while Vera Constantinovna said nothing about it and still she was a comrade.

Why? The answer was evident,—they belonged to the same circle of society.

That Saturday the Wolffs had invited him to dinner after the skating, and he stayed with them for some time afterwards. Vera Constantinovna left for a lesson in ballet dancing. A society ballet was to be given and she was taking lessons so as to take part in it. Sablin remained with Baroness Sofia. The drawing room was in semi-darkness, they sat in comfortable arm chairs, and there began between them a conversation of a type which young ladies sometimes allow themselves to lead with young men whom they consider to have had little experience in matters of love.

Sablin had the appearance of a Childe Harold. He was gloomy and discontented with Marousia. The Cinderella had remained mysterious too long and began to tire him. Sablin spoke to Baroness Sofia with bitter disgust about love. He saw in it only the satisfaction of sensual desire which is shortly followed by satiety. He hinted about Kitty, speaking about her with a poetical tendency and drew a misty silhouette of a mysterious Marousia. He let Baroness Sofia understand that he was already experienced in love, that he had had intrigues, and that he had the right to speak harshly of women and to consider them as beautiful, but inferior to men.

"That is all because you know nothing of women, dear Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Baroness Sofia, "you don't know love and that is why you judge so harshly. What you know and what you have experienced isn't love. It could be revealed to

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you only by a woman of your own circle of society and only in marriage blessed by God in the church."

"Oh, these marriages!" Sablin said with contempt, "why cannot one love freely? The marriage, the dowry, all this commonplace platitude of the marriage ceremony, the courting of the bride, and then a common bedroom, children, swaddling cloths, b-r-r-r-r! There is nothing poetical in it all!"

"You say this because you know nothing about it. The ceremonies preceding and attached to marriage are not commonplace. They are the touching and pure preparation of a young girl to consciously become the wife of her husband and the mother of his children. The common bedroom is the emblem not of platitude and corruption as you think, not of the union of bodies, but of the union of souls. How touching it is to wake up at night and to hear the quiet breathing of your beloved and to know that he is near you. A young girl in our class knows that she must always be beautiful. Although her body is near to her husband her soul is still nearer. This is the touching side of marriage between people of high society, people of the same ideas and conceptions."

Sablin now thought of this conversation. He pictured to himself a bedroom in clear blue, the floor covered by a huge soft carpet of light grey. Two beds of polished birch and soft armchairs stood in it. At his side lay Baroness Vera Constantinovna in light filmy nightdress. He felt that Baroness Sofia was right—it would be something different from his experience with Kitty and Marousia. Perhaps it would be something more spiritual, where sensuality would soar above the earth and ascend into the heavens.

"All that might be possible," he thought. The frequent invitations to dinner, Princess Repnin's favourable attitude towards him, all this might mean preparations for his future marriage with Vera Constantinovna.

"But how could he ever ask her to marry him after the insult that had been inflicted on him by a soldier?"

"What am I to do? Great God, what am I to do? Can it be

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that the only issue left is to take that very revolver and shoot myself?"

"No one is to be blamed for my death. I have taken my life because I cannot live after suffering an unavenged insult and because it is impossible to avenge it."

"So, all right," said Sablin and sat upright on his bed. "All right . . . I have shot myself . . . I have left a note . . . Lubovin asserts that he has shot me. An inquest is held and Marousia is discovered. I had proudly left life and left this beautiful, weak girl to bear all the burden of my sin. Would that be honest? Would that be noble?"

"Lieutenant Sablin!" he told himself severely, "you must know what you have to do. You must marry the girl you have led astray."

He sank on the pillows in exhaustion. "Marry the sister of a simple soldier! What must her relatives be like? Could I remain in the regiment after marrying the sister of a soldier who asserted that he had killed me? It would be very evident why I married her. The soldier had demanded it and I had married a girl with a past under pressure from him. Wouldn't that be a still greater insult to Marousia? Well, all right. That would be only for a moment, but after that would be a long, happy life in the consciousness of accomplished duty fulfilled. Marousia is so beautiful. Hadn't I believed her to be an aristocrat, a goddess who had descended to me? Hasn't she the little hands and slender feet of classical beauty? Has that been changed by the revelation of the fact that she is the sister of a soldier? Hadn't Matzneff and Gritzenko admired her at the Ceremonial Last Post and hadn't they desired to see her as a regimental lady?"

"Yes, that was all right so far as she was concerned. But she has relatives. She has a brother who had insulted him. She must have someone else. A mother, a father. . . ."

"What would the marriage in the regimental church be like? His crown bearers would be Princes, Counts, Barons . . . Rotbek would be the only one without a title. While those of his bride—the soldier Lubovin, clerk of the second squadron, an



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izvostchik and Heaven knows who else. Well, the marriage might be arranged without pomp. It would be possible to leave the regiment after it, but it would be impossible to disappear from her relatives. Lubovin would come to see them after the end of his service. A brother! He couldn't kick him out. And she herself,—she is nice now, so long as she is playing a rôle, but afterwards? She would grow fat, all the defects of her education would come out and life would become unbearable."

"No, death would be better than such an existence."

For some time Sablin lay without thinking. An inner process was going on in him without touching his brain or producing any thoughts. His blood was speaking instead. And all that it said was summed up in a simple decision—nothing has to be done. Neither death nor marriage. Marousia is also no longer needed. All his efforts should be concentrated on removing Lubovin. It might even be possible to kill him. To provoke him to harsh words and then shoot him like a dog. Then his honour would be saved. Then the regimental uniform would bear no stain, because he would have killed the offender. He would forget Marousia and put an end to it all. How could he meet her now, when the image of the infuriated soldier and the sound of his insulting words would always rise between them! He could not meet her. She had witnessed this shame; she wearied him and he would take care never to see her again. If she should seek his assistance, well, supposing in the case of her marriage, he would provide a generous dowry for her. That was the way of looking at things in their class,—a girl with a past would not be objected to if she were a girl with a dowry.

"No, Marousia is different," an inner voice told him, but he suppressed it and did not listen to it. Blood powerfully dictated its decisions. He would have to put Lubovin out of his way even if he had to commit murder. It was the case of that mad dog which it was necessary to shoot. He would never meet Marousia again, he would enjoy society pleasures, would court Vera Constantinovna purely and would think of the whole episode as a joke. After all, it happened outside of his circle of society.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

It wasn't with ease that Sablin came to this decision. He lay on his back and continued to think. It even seemed to him that he was in a strange dream, but it was only his thoughts and recollections which arose before his open eyes.

### LVII

SASHA SABLIN is four years old. He has a charming mother whom he rarely sees because she is an invalid. He thinks of her as of a distant fairy. He has a father who is rarely at home. They live in a big house filled with quietly moving footmen and servants. He is looked after by a nurse and a governess. Two soldiers, every day from different regiments, are to be constantly seen in the hall and an orderly adjutant sits in the neighbouring reception room.

Sasha knows that all this is because his father is an important General. He knows that they have their own coat of arms, —a golden sword on a blue field. In his father's study hang dark, terrible looking portraits of his father's fathers and mothers. There were many of them. All dark and terrible looking. The orderly adjutant, the soldiers who sat in the hall and the servants had no coats of arms. They were ordinary people; and he was forbidden to talk to them.

The next recollection of his youth was the death of his father and his funeral. This happened later, when he was eight years old. A large coffin, covered with gold brocade, stood in the drawing room. Gold cushions with his father's decorations and stars were laid around it. He could see in the coffin the edge of gold epaulettes, a blue ribbon and a face covered with gauze. Officers and soldiers stood motionless near the coffin. The little Sasha was full of pride at the way his dead father was surrounded and taken care of. Then he remembered sounds of music and endless rows of troops, infantry and cavalry who followed his father's coffin.

"Mama," he asked his mother, "were all these men father's soldiers?"

"Yes," answered his mother, "he had many more than those you see here."

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"Mama, and why are only the Egeria and the Chevalier Guards following father?"

He knew the uniforms of all the regiments. The walls of their house were covered with paintings of troops in action and bivouac on parade scenes. Sasha liked to look at them. He had his own soldiers. He liked to line them up in order as if they were real soldiers. Sometimes his father had come to him, looked at his soldiers and showed him the places where his company commanders, officers and sergeants should have stood.

"Pay attention to the neatness of the alignment. It is a very important thing."

"Father, shall I be an officer?"

"Of course."

"And if I don't want to?"

"You must. All the Sablins have been officers. Civilians are disgusting people."

Cadets often came to play with Sasha and they taught him songs in which civilians were mocked. When a new blouse was brought to him, he seriously told his mother:

"Mama, I shan't wear it. It's civilian."

He joined a Cadet Corps when he was nine. The Corps was a special one. Its privileges did not consist in better tuition or in a broader program than that of other schools. On the contrary Cadets who were slack in their studies but whose parents could pay higher rates were transferred from other Corps to this one. But the Cadets of Sasha's Corps were proud of the fact that they wore blue trousers, red and black belts and that they were preparing to become cavalry officers. That was their ideal. Infantry, artillery, military engineers were despised, but of course not to the same extent as civilians.

When the teacher of history in the Corps spoke about the ancient times he always emphasised the great importance of the Roman "equites" and the fact that they formed the upper class of ancient Rome. When the middle ages were spoken of it was again pointed out that the mounted troops,—the knights—were at the top of the social ladder, that they were surrounded

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

by their vassals who were not mounted and who did not have the noble traditions of the knights.

Sablin grew up at home with his invalid mother who loved him passionately. He drove to the Corps in a smart carriage drawn by a thoroughbred race horse and in the Corps he made friends only with the boys who had similar horses and who dreamed of serving in the cavalry.

In the Corps Sablin's contempt for civilians in general only increased. But there were some exceptions. The boys who studied at the Imperial Lyceum and at the Imperial Law School were treated differently from the rest of the schoolboys who were contemptuously called "blue meat."

Corruption reigned in the senior classes where many boys kept mistresses and openly boasted of the fact. Diseases which were attached to corruption did not frighten the boys and the special section of the Corps hospital was called the "cavalry section."

Sasha was saved from this by his mother. By her great influence over him and by her personal moral purity she made the boy fear corruption and instinctively draw away from it. His mother wanted to develop noble instincts in him, to bring him up in humanitarian ideas, but she could not overcome those that had grown strong in him from early childhood.

In the Corps and at home Sasha learned to idolize the Emperor and to love Russia. But what Russia? He despised the Russian villagers, the Russian peasants—he thought them ignorant people fit only for dirty work. Those that owing to their talents came from their midst and entered the upper classes as an exception only confirmed the general rule that the people should be kept in their present state. The Tsar and his army and his fleet represented the Russia which Sablin adored. The army meant everything to him. He knew the names, the numbers and the details of the uniforms of all the cavalry regiments and did not know even approximately the number of infantry divisions in the Russian army.

From the Cadet Corps he went to the Cavalry School. There

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he fully realised the barrier which existed between "we" and "they."

Sablin soon saw that "we" were few in numbers. "We" were only the Guards and not even all of them. There were regiments whose officers one could meet and be friendly with, but they were not considered as equals. The Army cavalry regiments were recognised, but not all of them. Only the Nijegorodsky Dragoon regiment was considered fully to belong to their own circle. Already at the school Sablin saw that he would have to live in a very small circle of people where everyone knew each other, in the circle which immediately surrounded the Emperor. It had its own rules and traditions. The main thing was to learn these rules and traditions and to follow them,—the rest would not matter. Because he, Sablin, was going to join a brilliant cavalry regiment. He, a Cadet, was more important than many officers and even Generals.

"Ah, Sablin! Sasha!"—an influential General would greet him at the theatre or at a ball and would stretch his hand out to him without noticing an old Colonel who stood to attention at his side and looked into his eyes. Sablin knew that this was the right thing to do—because he was one of "ours" and the other was one of "theirs."

His class of society still meant everything to Sasha, though he was living at a time when life was imperiously destroying the divisions between the classes and when the Emperor and the Grand Dukes themselves led this destructive movement. Lectures for the soldiers of the Guard Corps were arranged and were read by young officers of different regiments. Attempts were being made to follow a new road, to use education instead of rigid instruction, to transform the "nobles and people" into "officers and soldiers." But these attempts met a solid wall of mutual misunderstanding. The lectures soon became an unpleasant duty for which the officers prepared themselves but carelessly. The soldiers slept at the lectures. "An invention for the amusement of the nobles," they said.

Meanwhile military literature was openly saying that the army should be a school for the people. Compulsory instruc-



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tion of the soldiers in reading and writing was insisted upon. This was done but it went no further. The army lacked the necessary teachers. All these attempts shook the old foundations of the stern, rigid discipline based on unreasoning obedience to any order of a commander even a stupid one. They aroused doubts and questions, but they gave no answers to them. Questions and doubts also arose in Sablin's mind, but his principal beliefs were left untouched. His caste remained a caste for him.

The difference in ideas was especially great where relations to women were concerned. The men in Sablin's circle of society formed an exclusive caste and all women were also divided into "ours" and "theirs." The first were treated with knightly courtliness. It was possible to joke about them, to condemn their little defects, but they were always spoken of with great respect. Sablin remembered well how Matzneff, the cynic and philosopher, had once cut him short at the theatre after he had been introduced to the wife of a Guard officer. It was in the period of time between Kitty and Marousia. The young woman kept her hand for a second too long in Sablin's and looked at him with admiration. Sablin afterwards asked Matzneff: "Is she accessible?"

"My dear friend," Matzneff told him,—"one doesn't speak like this of the wives of Guard officers. You can try to have an intrigue with her, perhaps you may succeed, but you will be a beast and a scoundrel if you ever breathe a word about it. In spite of my disgust for duels I should be the first to challenge you. Our wives must be held sacred."

That was said by Matzneff whose own wife was living almost openly with Manotzkoff. Everyone knew it, but no one spoke of it and Manotzkoff less than anyone. Manotzkoff was of an old family, his name was mentioned in the acts of Mihail Fedorovitch, the intrigue was carried on decently, and everyone kept silent.

"Ours," were the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of the men of his own caste. It was possible to criticise every joint of a woman as if she were a horse, but it was impossible to say

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anything cynical about the wife or the daughter of a comrade. All this remained from the old landowners' mode of life when daughters of other "pomestchicks" were taken as wives and at the same time harems of young serf girls were formed. Intrigues with the latter sometimes went very far but it was more than easy to put an end to them. Serfdom was abolished before Sablin was born but the same attitude existed in the relations towards women of another circle. They seemed to be created for their diversion. Last winter Sablin spent the night at an "izba" during a hunt and saw a peasant girl of wonderful beauty. He desired her and found out that it wasn't difficult to arrange. When she undressed he found that she wore thin batiste underclothing. "Where did you get it?" asked Sablin.

"The Grand Duke . . . made a present of it to me," said the girl and named a young Grand Duke who was hardly more than a boy. Sablin passed the whole night with her and did not even find out her name and soon forgot that of the village.

He had esteemed Marousia as long as she had remained a Cinderella, but when she proved to be the sister of a simple soldier,—he had no reason to reckon with her any longer. Sablin knew that the whole of his caste would take his side and that all, beginning with the impeccable Repnin, would try to make him appear in the right and to remove this girl. The entire regiment would approve him and no one would blame him should he leave her.

The grey quadrangle of the window began to appear out of the shadows. Dawn was approaching.

Sablin closed his eyes and wrapped his head in the blanket. "I must sleep," he told himself.

He was aroused late in the morning by the noise of wood thrown down before the fireplace in the study.

"Sherstobitoff!" shouted Sablin.

A young soldier in a grey tunic entered the room. He seemed to bring in the smell of the frost.

"We did get scared yesterday," the soldier said, "Your Honour, when Lubovin ran in and said what he did. Great

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God! The whole squadron was glad when we heard it wasn't true!"

"Where is Lubovin?"

"He can't be found. He has bolted. Many think he's killed himself, because he looked quite mad. The sergeant is pleased and says he deserved it. God punished him for being a socialist."

"So you say Lubovin hasn't been found?" Sablin asked, taking out of his mouth the cigarette he had lit.

"No, your Honour, nowhere," answered the orderly.

"Well, all right. I will sleep for another hour," said Sablin stretching himself. He was overwhelmed by a happy feeling of delivery from danger.

## LVIII

FROM Sablin's flat Marousia went to her aunt where she always passed the night after evenings at the theatre and on similar occasions. She did not sleep, she was too deep in gloomy thoughts. She rose early, collected her books, as if she were going to her classes, but went home instead. Her father was not there, and the old cook Mavra was the only person in the house.

Marousia went to her room, flung her hat and coat on the bed, closed the window screens and sat down in a chair near the table. The sunlight and the crackling of the snow under the sledges and the feet of passers-by irritated her. She longed for peace and quiet. She had not been able to collect her thoughts during the night, and now felt only a mixture of limitless grief at the recollection of the events of the previous day and happiness that her Sasha was alive and unhurt. Now she pulled her thoughts together and raised a number of questions in her mind, answering them herself. Things did not appear so gloomy after all.

If only Sasha would love her!

She knew that she was pregnant, and was happy at the thought. Her child would be an eternal bond between herself and Sablin. She had wanted to speak to him some time previously, but his blind passion had prevented her. Now her brother

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Victor had come between them and it was necessary to hasten the explanation. She would calm and subdue Victor. She deeply believed in Sablin's honesty and knew that he would not prosecute Victor for his action. All that had happened would remain between them.

But never for a moment did she think that Sablin would marry her. She knew that it would be impossible, that the very ancestry which had so impressed her the first time she had visited Sablin, would forbid it, that the regiment would be against it. It was not necessary after all. Sablin was a prince in her eyes, and a prince could not stoop to the level of her people.

But were there not a few girls who had children? She would become an artist, have her own flat, she would have admirers, but her heart would belong to Sasha Sablin alone forever. Let him marry whomever he might choose, let him love his wife, but let him know that he has his Marousia and her child who think only of him and live only for him. She thought that this love in separation, love at a distance, would be especially beautiful and poetical.

She would come to him on Friday and not allow passionate embraces. She would tell him briefly and simply: "I am going to be the mother of your child. Are you happy?" And then she would quietly discuss the future. He would help her to settle in a separate flat for the time of her illness. She would refund the expenses afterwards. She would immediately take a job on the stage, even as a chorus-girl, so as to earn her own bread and not depend on her father. Her father should never know of her fall. It would kill him and he should know nothing about it. She would say that she was leaving the town. Perhaps Varia Martova would help her and then she could manage without Sablin's assistance. How nice it would be to owe him nothing, but give him everything!

She smiled quietly and sadly. This lonely existence in distant adoration of her prince seemed so beautiful.

The bell rang. Mavra opened and the familiar stealthy foot-

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steps of Korjikoff were heard in the dining room. He was the last person Marousia would have welcomed at this moment.

"Maria Mihailovna,"—she heard Korjikoff's rasping voice,—"may I see you just for a moment? The matter is most important."

"Come in, Fedor Fedorovitch," said Marousia. She did not rise to meet him, just held out her cold, limp hand. Korjikoff drew his own conclusions about her behaviour.

He sat down, put his elbows on his knees and rested his chin on the palms of his hands. He reminded her of Mephistopheles's statue at the Hermitage.

"Maria Mihailovna,"—began Korjikoff somewhat solemnly,—"I think you must be aware how deeply I love you. . . ."

Marousia remained motionless. He only saw that she was transparently pale and that she hardly breathed.

"I, an old student," began Korjikoff after a lapse of silence,—"adored you even in those days when you were dressed in a short brown skirt with a black apron and used to come to me when you could not master the difficulties of geometry. Yes. . . . Perhaps it is stupid, this confession? But it was inevitable. Maria Mihailovna, I ask you to marry me, I solemnly beg you to do so. Soon . . . this week."

Marousia rose.

"I don't understand you," she said.—"What are you saying, marry you? Why?"

"In the most formal manner. In a church, with a priest, a wedding dinner, the rough jokes of intoxicated guests—in a word, so that the whole factory would talk for some days of nothing else but your wedding."

Marousia laughed nervously. She felt cold all over her body.

"You, the convinced anarchist, are saying this? You, who have preached free love and civil marriage to the girls at the factory?" answered Marousia.

"Yes, I say this. And I alone have the right to tell you this, because I have loved you so long."

"And, pray, why do you claim such rights?" asked Marousia, straightening herself.



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"Because you will soon be a mother," whispered Korjikoff, not looking at Marousia.—"Do you realise what that would mean if it became known? It would kill your father if he ever heard of it. Maria Mihailovna, I do not want you to become an object of jests and gossip. I love and respect you too much."

"Oh!" groaned Marousia. She sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

"Do not insult me,"—she said quietly.

"I do not. I do not blame you either. . . . I respect and pity you. But you must understand, Maria Mihailovna, that your hopes could live only as long as Lieutenant Sablin lived. . . . Now. . . ."

She interrupted him. She stretched out her hands, palms outwards, as if trying to shield herself from his words.

"What do you mean? While Lieutenant Sablin was alive . . . ? Has anything happened to him?"

"But yesterday. . . . Your brother Victor . . . murdered him in your presence."

"He only fired at him and missed. Alexander Nicolaievitch is alive and unhurt. . . . Where is Victor?"

"I have dressed him in civilian clothes, have given him a passport abroad and have sent him away from Russia. If he makes no blunders he will find himself in safety and in the hands of trustworthy people. All this, of course, changes the aspect of things, Maria Mihailovna," said Korjikoff rising,—"but my proposal stands, I beg you to marry me and to do so soon."

"You must know that I love him and him alone," said Marousia.

"I do," said Korjikoff briefly.

"I love his child already now," said Marousia, covering her face with her hands.

"I can understand that also," muttered Korjikoff in a changed voice. He was exceedingly pale.—"Notwithstanding this, Maria Mihailovna, I beg you to marry me."

"Who are you?" whispered Marousia.—"Are you a scoundrel and a cynic, or . . . or a saint?"

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"I beg you to marry me," said Korjikoff persistently and made a step towards Marousia.

She rose and moved away from him.

"Leave me," she whispered,—*"leave me. I implore you."*

"Very well. But I shall come every day for an answer."

"I cannot be your wife. Forgive me, Fedor Fedorovitch, but I do not love you. I have the greatest respect for you, as if you were my brother. But I cannot be your wife."

"I do not ask for that. I only beg you to marry me."

"Leave me," whispered Marousia.

"All right, I will go," said Korjikoff in an empty voice.—*"I understand. You cannot give your answer before you have seen Lieutenant Sablin. I shall return on Saturday."*

"Leave me, I implore you!"

"Do you realise, Maria Mihailovna, how deeply I have loved and do love you," said Korjikoff, grinding his teeth. He turned on his heels and went out of the room.

Marousia walked to her bed with difficulty and flung herself down, giddy and half conscious. Korjikoff's proposal had been more than she could bear.

## LIX

MAROUSIA spent the whole week waiting anxiously for her meeting with Sablin. Several times she went to see the Martoffs and inquired about letters. It seemed to her that he ought to write after all that had happened. But there were no letters for her. "He is probably waiting for Friday, as I am," she thought,—*"he understands that such matters cannot be decided by letter. So much will have to be said and so much in the words depends on the intonation."*

She went out earlier than usual on Friday, then decided that it would be better to arrive ten or fifteen minutes later. It would be too awful not to find him at home if for some reason he were detained. She left her cab at the beginning of the Nevsky and went on foot, thinking of him and of the way she would meet him. She saw herself running up the staircase . . . the

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door opens quietly, even before she touches the bell . . . lights shine in the dining room and a fire crackles merrily.

He would kiss her and lead her to his study. She would gaze at his face for a moment and would then say quietly and with feeling: "Sasha, do you know that I am going to be a mother. I shall soon be the mother of your child. Are you happy?"

What would his feelings be? Would he appear troubled? He would certainly be happy. He would deliver her from the embrace of his arms, would put her down in an arm chair near the fire and would sit down near her. And then she would first of all tell him that he was free, that she did not even think of marriage. She would tell him her plans. He would probably smile in his usual charming manner and would light a cigarette, which was always a sign of excitement and a desire to protest. But she would not let him speak, she would tell him all the details of her plans and how she would leave him and concentrate all her attention on her motherly duties and stage work.

"Excellent, dear Mousinka," he would say,—“but it is all awfully naïve.”

She could almost hear the kind tones in which he would say that, with a merry twinkling of happiness in his eyes. She smiled. The picture was so vivid in her thoughts. She had not noticed that she was walking down the Nevsky alone in the evening and that men were turning 'round to look at her. A tall bearded officer dressed in a fur coat was following her and noticing her smile grew bolder and said:

"We are going in the same direction. Let us go together and it won't be so dull. . . ."

She felt frightened, and, almost running between the swift sledges, crossed the Nevsky and walked under the arches of the Gostinny Dvor shining with the bright lights of the shop windows.

She arrived at the chapel. Hundreds of thin wax candles were burning before the image of the Holy Virgin. People were coming and going, placing their lighted candles and leaving the chapel. Marousia had never been a believer. But now she felt unwonted emotion as she looked at the image of the pure

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Virgin. The fact that she held in her arms her sacred child, the Saviour of the world, seemed to her to be a symbol.

The Holy Virgin,—a mother, would forgive and defend those girls who had become mothers but had remained pure nevertheless. The thought came to Marousia that there would be no sin in her motherhood because it would be expiated by her great love. That love would cover and obtain forgiveness for all that had been unclean in their relations.

Her heart overbrimmed with love when she went up the stairs leading to Sablin's flat. She attentively read the metal plate on the first floor: "Bandmaster Fedor Carlovitch Linde." Higher up was the door with Rotbek's card and she wondered what Rotbek was like. Opposite was Sablin's door but it did not open as usual. Could it be that he had not heard her footsteps?

She stopped, and had to cling on the hand-rail so as not to fall. Her heart was throbbing quickly and everything seemed to swim all around. Was it because she had walked too quickly? Dark forebodings came to her. She could not decide to ring the bell. Before, he used almost to hear the throbblings of her heart, her quiet breathing, and she herself felt his presence behind the door when coming up the staircase. All her beautiful and touching dreams were vanishing, and she felt only emptiness and a heavy weight oppressing her.

Her little finger clad in a gray glove—Sasha's gift—immediately waking the silence of the flat and the staircase, touched timidly the button of the electric bell. It rang out so loud and sharp that she started. But Sasha did not hear it. She rang again—dot—dash—dot. That was the agreed signal, but she had never yet had to use it. Sasha would now know for certain that it was his Marousia who was standing before the door.

Heavy, lazy, unfamiliar footsteps were heard approaching from the other side, the door was opened and a soldier in a red shirt and top-boots appeared before Marousia. He looked sleepily and severely at the young girl.

"Whom do you want?" he asked rudely.

"Isn't Alexander Nicolaievitch at home?" asked Marousia in a faint voice. A slight hope still glimmered that perhaps he

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was ill or on duty and that he had left her a note. The soldier disappointed her. He answered with indifference, scratching himself.—“His Honour left at four, to his bride, I believe. Don’t think he’ll return before two of the night.”

He closed the door. There was no note, not even a scrap of paper for Marousia. He had left her, he did not love her and did not even trouble about her any more.

Marousia did not remember afterwards how she came down the staircase and how she ran down the dimly lit streets, avoiding the Nevsky. She arrived at home on foot towards nine o’clock, weary and chilled by the wind and the frost. Her father was drinking tea in the dining room. She had to divert him by conversation and appear merry and animated. But she did not succeed in this. Old Lubovin was looking at her keenly and at last asked: “What is the matter, Marouska, is anything wrong?”

“I have a headache, father,” she said.

“Well go to bed. You have a long distance to walk from your classes. But don’t drop them. You will become learned in the end.”

He kissed her on the forehead and blessed her. Her father’s kindness touched her, and tears filled her eyes. She turned away, left the dining room quietly and having flung herself on her bed she buried her face in the pillows and lost consciousness.

When the swoon passed away, she could not understand for some time how she had returned home. She remembered only that she had been standing on the staircase in the barracks and ringing the bell—dot—dash—dot. And now she was in her own room half lit by the reflected rays from the street lanterns.

“Thus everything is finished,” was her first conscious thought. Stage life and her beautiful dreams of love for a beautiful prince had become impossible and there remained nothing else for her but marriage with Korjikoff, whom she could never love. She would have to organise a home and some sort of workshop under the guidance of her aunt. She thought of a sign-board on a wooden house in some distant quarter of the



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

town: "Modes et Robes. Madame Marie Korjikoff," of a large room littered with cloth and trimmings, a crowd of girl apprentices and herself among them. Canaries would sing before the windows, geraniums would blossom and the girls chatter. Why was that not a picture of possible happiness?

It was better than the lot of many. Oh! It was not of such happiness that she had dreamt. But she would bear everything for the sake of her prince's child. She would bring him up like a prince, she would lavish all her love upon him.

Recollections of Sablin appeared distant and dim. The Tsar riding with his escort on the Manœuvre Field mounted on a beautiful horse and surrounded by his soldiers, the Empress, the handsome cadet sentries before the tent, the music, the roar of guns, the touching prayer of the old drummer—all this was only a fairy tale. And the Neva under the cover of silvery white nights, the thoughts about the terrible past of the palaces. And the beautiful youth with his ancestors and the history of his regiment—all had been only a fairy tale. But it had passed through reality, the dream of ravishing beauty had existed and had left him, who would be born from this dream, this enchanting fairy tale. Oh! A hero would be born, a great man of marvellous beauty and powerful talents. She would bring him up to have a deep love for humanity, because she had no anger, no blame, no reproach for his father. Only tender, all forgiving and all understanding love.

### LX

SABLIN woke on that Friday with a vague desire that she would come. Sweet recollections of past Fridays rose before him but were immediately followed by the terrible phantom of Lubovin and by the recollection of the insults he had had to bear in the presence of his beloved. Sablin felt that words of love would vanish from his lips, that he would never again be able to approach this young girl. It would be wiser not to meet her at all. Probably she would not come herself. For a moment he thought of writing. But what should he write? He would not be able to adopt the old tone of openly expressed thoughts—

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Lubovin would be in his way. It seemed as if he would read the letter and not Marousia.

She would probably come with her brother now, if she came at all. Sablin had noticed several times during the past week a cowardly feeling of fear in his heart. He was afraid of meeting Lubovin because he knew that he had to kill him, but would he have the nerve to do it? He would have to commit suicide if not. What would he say to Marousia, how could he tell her that he had to kill her brother, how would he be able to speak about him and all that had happened? It would be impossible. She would probably understand that and would not come to see him as usual.

Sablin had received an invitation for Friday from the Wolff's. An early dinner was planned, then a drive to the islands in troikas, tobogganning on the Krestovsky island, tea there, a supper late at night at the Wolff's house. The day promised many subtle pleasures. The young, happy, smiling face of Vera Constantinovna, ruddy from the frost, would be opposite him in the sledge. Her white ermine cap and white veil, her white coat of ermine fur and high white boots would make her resemble a fairy in winter dress. He would hear her merry voice as he sped with her down the steep Krestovsky hills, displaying his cleverness in steering the sledge. How nice it would all be!

Sablin went to the morning drill, then straight to the Mess and played billiards there after lunch. He sent to fetch fresh clothing from his flat, changed in the Mess and at five o'clock he was ascending the stairs of the Wolff's house, feeling fresh and clean.

The day passed agreeably near Vera Constantinovna. She seemed so beautiful and pure that Sablin began to fear that he would never dare to make a proposal to her. Everything was pleasant. The drive in troikas, the hills where she shrieked with delight, the Baroness Sofia and her husband. The old Baroness was amiable and even the old Baron, who smoked cigars gloomily, paid for everything and said something in German that made both his daughters laugh.

Sablin returned home after three o'clock in the morning. His

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orderly reported while helping him to undress that a young girl had called who wanted to see him.

"What did you say?" asked Sablin.

"I said that Your Honour was not at home and would not return until late," answered the orderly.

"Was she alone?"

"Yes, Your Honour."

"Very well," said Sablin,—*"you can go."*

"Marousia had come,"—he thought. He felt vexed, ill at ease and ashamed. His conscience was beginning its work. But Sablin thrust away these thoughts. He was so happy, so tired by the frost and the excitement brought by wine and the vicinity of a charming young girl, that he simply would not bother about a battle with his conscience. "What is finished," he said to himself,—*"is finished."* And he was soon asleep. In the morning he went to the barracks of the squadron with a firm decision to write a note to Marousia after drill and to explain briefly and clearly that it was her brother and herself who were responsible for the cessation of their friendship, that he was of course ready to do all he could to lessen his guilt before her. . . . But he was not able to write that letter.

Gritzenko called him aside in the squadron and said: "Go to Prince Repnin's flat after drill, Sasha. He wants to see you."

"For what purpose?" asked Sablin.

"I don't know dear friend, let us go together."

## LXI

THEY found that Steepochka was with the Prince. In the hall Sablin recognised his short overcoat with colonel's shoulder straps and felt comforted. Steepochka would mediate for him and Gritzenko also seemed to be on his side.

The hoarse laughter of the Prince was heard in the study. He was joking about something with Steepochka. An orderly in livery reported their arrival and they were immediately invited to enter. The Prince and Steepochka rose to meet them, put aside their cigarettes and the Prince assumed an official manner. But the fact that he called Sablin by his Christian names

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and not by his rank and family name when addressing him, showed that nothing dangerous was ahead and Sablin felt reassured.

"Sit down, Pavel Ivanovitch, sit down Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Repnin, motioning Gritzenko to the sofa and Sablin to a chair near the huge writing table.

All sat down and silence reigned for several seconds. Repnin fixed the sharp attentive gaze of his clever eyes on Sablin's eyes as if trying to read his thoughts. Steepochka was beating out a nervous tattoo on the table with his short, thick fingers. Gritzenko's gaze was wandering over the room.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch," Repnin began at last,—*"A mysterious event took place a week ago in the regiment. Lubovin, private of the second squadron, deserted under exceptional circumstances. I think that you alone could enlighten us on this mystery. All the efforts of the secret police have been fruitless. Lubovin is not to be found anywhere, neither dead nor alive. No soldier has left Petersburg without the necessary authority. We have therefore decided to invite you here and to put you some questions in private conversation. What can you tell us about all this?"*

Sablin did not answer immediately. His heart was beating wildly and he felt cold all over but he pulled himself together and answered calmly:

*"I have told all that I know in my report to the Commander of the regiment, Prince. I cannot add anything more."*

*"I would not have put this question to you," said Repnin,—  
"if this perhaps most simple but unfortunate occurrence had not received a certain publicity. Petersburg is large, but after all it does not differ much from provincial towns. This event has become a subject of gossip in society. The name of the deserter is being attached to yours and you must agree that this is good neither for you nor for the regiment."*

*"What more can I say, when I know nothing," Sablin said with dignity.*

Repnin looked keenly at Sablin, who lowered his eyes under the sharp, steel-like gaze.

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"Tell me, is there a woman mixed up in this matter?" asked Repnin.

"No," said Sablin in an empty voice, reddening to the very roots of his hair.

"Nicolai Mihailovitch," said Steepochka,—“why do you ask such questions? Could a decent officer tell you whether he had an intrigue with a respectable woman or not?”

"I understand this," Repnin said seriously,—“I understand this. But there is a special detail here, Alexander Nicolaievitch, which struck me as being peculiar, and which made me invite you here. You told the orderly officer that you had been waiting for a certain person, but that she had not come. . . . Am I right in this?”

"Yes, I do not deny it," Sablin answered quietly.

"Who was that person?"

"I cannot name her."

"We do not insist," said Steepochka, his fingers beating a still sharper tattoo on the table.

Repnin said nothing. Silence reigned in the study. Repnin's daughters were practising on a piano two rooms away and the monotonous tune penetrated into the study, cheerless and dull.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Repnin, lifting his small aristocratic head,—“this summer you took an entrance ticket to the Ceremonial Last Post for Maria Lubovina."

The question was so unexpected that Sablin started and grew pale. He knows all!—The thought flashed through his mind. He knows all and is only playing with me to make me own up. What am I to do? Tell the whole truth. Tell everything openly, as it happened. That Lubovin had come and to avenge the honour of his sister had insulted him and had fired a revolver, but had missed. Tell that he had lived all this time in the grip of cowardice,—that he had feared Lubovin's return. And then? There would be only one honourable issue, which would not stain the honour of the regiment. Prince Repnin would rise, put a loaded revolver before him and say: "Lieutenant Sablin. You have the means yet to save your honour and that of your uniform. I give you half an hour for medita-



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tion." He would then go away with Steepochka and Gritzenko and leave him alone. Sablin knew of a similar case.

One of the members of a noble family had stolen some time ago the jewels of his mistress and had pawned them. His younger brother bought them back, but the affair became public and he then called his elder brother into his room, placed a revolver before him and said: "You are an officer and you must know what you have to do. It is the decision of our family." The elder brother committed suicide. There had been a lot of talk about this in society. Many pitied the deceased but all justified the younger brother and considered that he had acted like a hero. Prince Repnin would also be a hero in his eyes if he would let him commit suicide in his study. But if the scandal of the other officer had not become public, if his mistress had not spoken, would the younger brother have given the revolver to the elder? A scandal is a scandal only when it is talked about, but when everything has been kept secret, there is no scandal at all. Sablin looked at Repnin. He expected to meet a cold impassionate steel gaze, full of contempt and demanding death. . . . But he saw that the prince was looking at him with love and pity. An unusual softness was reflected in his grey eyes. He was patiently waiting for an answer and hoped that it would be favourable for Sablin.

"I remember something vaguely," said Sablin, not daring to look into Repnin's eyes.—"Yes, it is true. I had asked for a ticket. Lubovin had told me something about his old mother . . . I don't remember well who it was. . . . We had been singing together; I was captivated by his voice and wanted to comply with his request. Yes, something similar did really happen."

Repnin lowered his eyes. He felt ashamed for Sablin, understanding the whole truth now. Sablin was lying. Lubovina was really mixed up in this affair. Who was she? A wife, a sister,—it did not matter, but there had been a woman because of whom a soldier had shot at an officer and the officer had not retaliated. But what could he have done? Now the only thing left for him was to die. Repnin looked at Sablin. He liked this

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officer who was the pride of the regiment and he knew of the secret intentions of the Princess, his wife, to marry him to Vera Wolff. Could he sign the verdict?

The scales, simple and dull, came from the other end of the flat, stopped, and began again. They reminded him of nice girls in short dresses and of purity, truth and happiness. The same thought came to Repnin that had come to Sablin. The only issue was to hand him a revolver, and to condemn him to death. Dismissal from the regiment would only increase the scandal. But he could not give the death warrant. The scales played by the childish hands prevented him. They spoke of young lives just at their dawn, they reminded him that Sablin was also young and at that moment Repnin could not decide to wrench from him his life. He remained silent, waiting for assistance from the judges. Gritzenko understood his feelings.

"There is one thing that I can't grasp, Prince," he said.—"Why so much fuss is made about this case. I have known Lubovin for more than two years. He is the worst soldier in the squadron, forward, almost a socialist. He is half mad. All this stupid affair may be only some hysterical prank or base black-mailing. We only help Lubovin and support the aims he has pursued by dwelling longer upon it."

"You are right, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Repnin.—"But people have begun to talk already. I do not know who started it, but the Grand Duke asked me yesterday whether it was true that a soldier had shot at an officer and had then deserted."

"Well, what then? What then?" interrupted Steepochka, who had suddenly become animated.—"They will talk for some time and then stop. All of it should be forgotten. Lubovin is not here, but even if he were—one does not reckon with a madman. Alexander Nicolaievitch should be sent on leave for some time. Let him have a good rest and, what is most important, let him leave Petersburg and the neighbourhood of this gossip."

Repnin sighed with relief. This possible issue seemed most convenient and acceptable.

"Pavel Ivanovitch, what is your opinion?" he asked.

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"The plan is excellent. Should Lubovin return, I will have him placed in a lunatic asylum."

No one asked for Sablin's opinion.

"Then, gentlemen, I consider the matter closed. Lieutenant Sablin is quite guiltless. There is nothing that one, could do against a mad dog. I am convinced, gentlemen, that all that has been said here won't leave these walls. And now, gentlemen, I hope that you will lunch with me. The Princess is waiting for us . . ." Repnin rose from his chair.

Three days later Sablin left on leave for South Russia.

## LXII

KORJIKOFF kept his promise and on Saturday came to see Marousia.

"Maria Mihailovna," he said, entering her room, not having even knocked at the door,—*"I have come for an answer."*

Marousia started. She was sitting at her table and had been reading Sablin's letters of the previous year.

"What do you wish?" she asked, looking at him with entreaty.

"Maria Mihailovna, I have come to beg you to marry me. . . . Oh! I beg only for your hand! I do not dare even to speak of your heart. I know that it belongs to another man."

"Do you know," said Marousia clenching her teeth,—*"that he did not receive me. He was not at home when I came. He acted as if I were a girl of the worst kind. Did you hear this? And you come to me after that! You want to marry me!"*

"It is good that he did not offer you money, be thankful for that," said Korjikoff seriously and laid his hand on Marousia's. He sat down in a chair near her.

"Maria Mihailovna, let us talk seriously. I came last week and have come now not with the purpose of playing the fool. I have weighed everything and have understood everything. Once can forgive, when one understands! Maria Mihailovna! I have nothing to forgive. Because it has all been my fault. I brought about your acquaintance. I overestimated your power and my own,—do you understand?—my own! I thought that they were weak. I thought that the moment had come to over-

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throw the cursed reign of absolutism. I knew that the Army barred the way, I knew that by a special system of training the officers could so impress the brains of simple folk that they became capable of killing their own fathers and brothers. I wanted to attack their power, I wanted to make the officers waver. I had chosen you as a weapon but you were attracted by beauty and perished in consequence. Now you must realise that you made a mistake. You must see now what is lurking behind that beauty."

"Beauty," whispered Marousia.

"What do you mean?" asked Korjikoff, caressing her hand,—  
"beauty even in the fact that he has left you, that you have not been accepted in vice?"

"There is beauty even in vice. I have thought it all over, Fedor Fedorovitch, and I have come to the conclusion that Sasha could not have acted otherwise. Their power lies in beauty and there is beauty in the lightness with which they handle us. If Sasha had married me. . . . No, I can't talk of that. Fedor Fedorovitch, I have come to realise that they are right and not you. I realise that equality will never, never become possible on earth. All that you say is untrue. It is all nothing but Utopia. Capitalists will always exist, as shall lords and slaves. Yes. . . . Can you understand, Fedor Fedorovitch, what I have been through to make me realise that he was a lord and I only a slave and when I saw that I was happy in this feeling?"

"You were blinded by love," said Korjikoff.

"No, Fedor Fedorovitch,—my brother Victor insulted him and ran away. And I felt that a slave had insulted him because a lord would have remained to bear the consequences of his action."

"He had to do it because of the unjust laws, Maria Mihailovna."

"Fedor Fedorovitch, I will tell you everything. Your Marousia is changed, she is not the same as she used to be. She has left not only you, but she has left the party also. I do not love the Tsar and I condemn the monarchy, but I understand it. I

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agree with you that the division of humanity into Russians, Germans, English, Chinese is absurd, but I love Russia and the Russians more than anyone else. I even love the Army!"

"This will all vanish with time, your passion is speaking in you," said Korjikoff.

"No, Fedor Fedorovitch, I wanted to poison him and have been poisoned myself. I have noticed cruelty, blood and injustice in his ideas, but I have also seen a great beauty in them. With us everything is grey, pale, disgusting; sweat replaces blood, while their lives are full of powerful impulses. Ours are dull and monotonous."

"Maria Mihailovna, I can understand this also. It will soon disappear."

"You say that you understand, Fedor Fedorovitch. No, you understand nothing, and you never will. I had no God and now I see that God exists."

"A cruel, revengeful and unjust God," said Korjikoff.

"No," Marousia replied with passion.—"Only an unknown and inconceivable one. Yesterday I passed by a chapel where there stood the image of the Holy Virgin with hundreds of candles burning before it. Hundreds of people have been comforted there. And I feel that forgiveness and clemency can come only from there."

"Nonsense, Maria Mihailovna, nerves, illness—nothing more."

"Can you forgive?" said Marousia and looked attentively into Korjikoff's eyes.—"No, you will never forgive and you will never forget."

"I repeat that I have nothing to forgive. I do not condemn you and I understand you."

"Do you understand everything? Do you know what I will teach my child, when it shall be born?"

Marousia looked for some time into Korjikoff's eyes as if trying to penetrate into his very soul and said at last in a moved whisper:

"God exists! That is what I will teach him. I shall bring



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him up in the feelings of love for Russia and of fidelity to the Emperor. . . . What will you say to this, Fedor Fedorovitch?"

But just as he was going to answer she stretched out her hand to his mouth with a childish gesture and said: "Stop. Answer nothing. I shall learn your answer with time."

"What kind of a man are you, Fedor Fedorovitch?" she added quietly.—"Perhaps you are a saint? Perhaps you do not believe in all that you preach? You have such a beautiful soul! I can see it! What a pure beautiful soul you have! When that is true one can be tortured but still continue to sing hymns. . . . You are preparing yourself for torture with me, but still you continue to sing. . . . But do you realise that I shall never love you, although I see how good, how morally pure and beautiful you are. I shall always, do you understand,—always,—remain true to him."

Marousia rose and took a photograph of Sablin out of the drawer.

"Look,—this is his photograph. Read the inscription,—'To my beloved Mousia.' He gave it to me then and now he has not received me, he has thrust me aside. But still I kiss him. You wanted to be tortured—well, be! Look! Do you suffer? No, you seem happy. You smile! You laugh. . . . You are mad! You must be a sensualist! No, Fedor Fedorovitch, tell me! Who are you?"

"I am an old experienced student," said Korjikoff laughing, "I am a man without prejudices, with a hardened will and a strong heart and you,—you are a little child kissing a doll. Do you think that I can feel jealousy towards a doll? Rot! What nonsense! Beauty, God, the Tsar and your love,—all was a dream. A dream of your childhood. Nothing will be left of it all when you grow up."

"I shan't love you even if I do grow up," Marousia said angrily.—"I shan't love you and I don't want to, just because you are so good. I shall always love him but you—never. Is that clear?"

"Maria Mihailovna, my proposal is entirely business-like and has nothing to do with your feelings. All you have said just

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now comes from your heart, from your general state and from your nerves. We shall talk of that some other time. And now I hope you will allow me to beg your father's consent to our marriage. I will talk to him as soon as he returns home. He is a man of old ideas and won't understand either your delirium or my philosophy. We want to be married in the local church—and nothing more is to be said."

"How can you continue to speak of it now." Marousia interrupted him.

"All the more so now, when I see the state you are in. If my wife says all this nonsense—it won't matter, but it will be bad should it be said by a girl."

"Bad in other people's opinion."

"Exactly."

"You are afraid of them," sneered Marousia.

"I am afraid of no one, not even of you," said Korjikoff,—  
"but I want to prevent a new and unnecessary tragedy, which can easily be done through a simple formality. The marriage ceremony is nothing to me but it will mean delivery from a catastrophe for your father. He is on the brink as it is because of the desertion of his son. Do not kill him. We will marry and put an end to it all. You can continue to live in this same room and thus stay with your father. I shall remain where I live now under the pretext of work and insufficient means to hire a flat. No one will blame us for such an arrangement."

"But you will lose your freedom forever because of this marriage."

"This point worries me least of all. If I do ever love anyone, it will be a girl who holds all these customs in contempt and who will come to me without any marriage ceremonies. I love you because you act differently from what you have said just now. You speak about God, the Tsar, about Russia, and at the same time you give yourself entirely away to love and to passion. I am certain that you never thought then of the Tsar or of Russia. Do as you like, I would divorce you if you ever felt for a second time anything similar. I have a broader understanding of love than you have. One has to offer everything if one loves,

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and give what one holds to be dearest of all. . . . Well, enough of this. I will speak to your father immediately. I see him coming down the street. Will you confirm my words by your consent?"

Marousia nodded silently. She was trying to keep back her tears.

### LXIII

OLD LUBOVIN was not surprised at Korjikoff's proposal. He knew that Korjikoff had loved Marousia even when she was a schoolgirl and took lessons from him. But he was not pleased at this turn of events. He had hoped for a better match and had spent a lot of money on Marousia's education not for the purpose of seeing her Korjikoff's wife. Who after all was Korjikoff? He could remember him as a ten-year-old school-boy at the time when his son Victor was born. Korjikoff used to come to their modest lodging and Lubovin's wife fed the ever hungry Fedia in the kitchen. His father had been a workman in Lubovin's factory, had early become a widower and was killed in an accident soon afterwards. The boy studied on money provided by the factory's office but there was no one to feed or to look after him. He had stood first at the end of his public school course. He then entered the university and had been studying there for more than ten years now, not being able to pass some examinations. Korjikoff was under the supervision of the police. But he was a clever fellow, slippery as an eel and had never been caught.

Lubovin had hoped for a man with a definite position and good prospects for the future and not for such an unreliable individual as Korjikoff. He seemed too old for Marousia. But Lubovin frankly acknowledged that he understood nothing about modern young people and that he could not talk to them.

"Are you serious about it?" he asked, after listening for some time to Korjikoff's explanations.—"Has she given her consent?"

"I am quite in earnest," said Korjikoff, bowing respectfully, like a real bride-groom and obedient future son-in-law.

"On what will you live?"

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"I have the necessary means. The party can afford to give them now," said Korjikoff.

"That is just what I don't like, Fedia. You will have to leave all this nonsense when you marry. No good will come from your propaganda work in the factory. Three honest lads were arrested yesterday because they were found in the possession of some of your pamphlets. You have made Victor desert. The police are constantly watching me now. How can you be a bride-groom and a husband after all this?"

"But you ought to credit us with a desire to help you, Mihail Ivanovitch. The party is fighting for the workmen, it helps them to strive against capital and the day of our victory is approaching. The factories shall then be in the hands of the workmen and we shall reap our reward. Our work won't be forgotten. We, and not they shall be on top."

"You will be a statesman," Lubovin remarked with a laugh.

"Perhaps higher up even. A President."

"Stop that, Fedia. The Cossacks will thrash you for such words and you really deserve it. "You are a blessed fool and nothing more. A lazy beggar, a propagandist. And you think that I will let you marry my daughter?"

"Maria Mihailovna has given her consent, Mihail Ivanovitch. We have talked everything over."

"She has given her consent? I cannot believe it. Marousia, come here, darling."

Marousia appeared silently in the doorway, looking like a shadow.

"Have you heard the song he sings? He wants to marry you. Eh? Will you do so? I cannot compel you to refuse, but I cannot approve it. Is it possible that you have consented?"

Marousia approached her father, fell on his breast and whispered through tears:

"I have, father. He loves me."

"Well, marry then. It may be that he loves you, only it all seems queer to me—everything is different from what it was in

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my time. A bride weeping at the betrothal! Eh! Marousia, Marousia. . . . If only you will be happy. . . .”

### LXIV

MAROUSIA's marriage was celebrated a week later. Korjikoff had hurried things as her situation became more and more apparent and later it would become difficult to escape gossip. The marriage festivities were merry and noisy. Old Lubovin got drunk, the guests acclaimed the young pair when they timidly kissed in their presence. Even the police were represented by the local inspector and that circumstance helped Korjikoff to free himself from supervision and become classified as a well intentioned man. Korjikoff respectfully kissed his wife's hand when the last guest had left, put on his overcoat and went home. Marousia shut herself up in her room.

The outward flow of her life was not altered. Until summer she continued to attend her courses, but Korjikoff used his right of a husband to visit her each day and to help her in her studies. He brought her socialistic pamphlets, read them to her and tried to prove the correctness of the teachings they proclaimed and the necessity of armed warfare against capital by the workmen. He culminated the Army and the monarchy but Marousia did not retaliate. She did not agree with him but had no desire to argue. She felt a new life beginning in her and she was happy in listening to it. All her thoughts were in the future. Korjikoff kept his promise and never once reminded her of her situation and of her love.

Old Lubovin grew grimmer and grimmer as he watched the young pair. He began to drink—a vice that had been unknown to him before. Not only his melancholy mood affected him but also an old disease. Marousia called a doctor, who overcoming all his protests examined Lubovin, and grew serious immediately. The days of his life were numbered. During the spring he remained constantly in bed and in summer Marousia did not leave his bedside. Lubovin saw that she was going to become a mother, counted the time on his fingers and his features deepened in grimness. He was beginning to understand his daugh-



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ter's sudden marriage—Marousia had sinned. But with whom? Could it have been Korjikoff?

The inevitable explanations took place on a day in July. The sun was scorchingly hot, clouds of dust floated down the street, which was filled by the rumble of heavy carts, horse tramways and by the unhealthy smell of a workmen's quarter. Marousia walked heavily into her father's room and sat down near his bed. He had only just had an attack, his forehead was moist and his hair dishevelled. He looked at Marousia's form with displeasure and at her face which had grown plain, saying:

"Marousia, was your marriage in February or in March?"

"On the 6th of February," Marousia answered quietly.

"So, so. . . . And when do you expect it to happen?"

Marousia gasped, her eyes brimmed with tears, and the expression of her face became pitiful.

"I don't know, father," she whispered.

"You don't know? Is that really so?"

He remained silent for some time. Superhuman suffering was depicted on his face.

"With whom have you sinned?" he asked so hoarsely that Marousia could hardly understand the words he was saying.—It can't have been Fedor? I don't believe it. Tell me his name."

Marousia remained silent, her face hidden in her hands.

"You have deceived your father. I have brought you up, I have given you education. . . . I have indulged you, thinking that something would come out of you . . . and only to witness your degradation. . . ."

A spasm seized him. Something rose in his throat and he gurgled heavily.

"Father! Dear father . . . what is it? . . ." Marousia said bending over him. He was lying motionless on his back; his gaze was fixed on Marousia with an expression of pain and anguish mixed with reproach.

"Father, dear, say something . . . forgive me. . . ."

"I have thought all my life only about you. . . ." Lubovin said distinctly,—*"I have devoted myself to you. . . . To you and to Victor, and you . . . left me . . . deceived me. . . ."*

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Tears appeared in his eyes which were growing dim.

"I am dying alone. . . . In disgrace. . . ."

"Father, forgive me!"

Marousia knelt and put her arm 'round her father's head. Her eyes were near to his, looking sorrowfully at her.

"Forgive me. . . ."

"I can forgive. . . . I must forgive. . . . But I cannot understand this Marousia. Can it be that you had no thought of me? . . . Had you no pity for me. . . . Ah! Marousia. . . . I had hoped to die differently. . . . I have never known disgrace in my life and now I have to die in shame. . . . My children have deceived me. . . ."

Marousia was weeping.

"Well, do not cry,"—Lubovin said kindly.—"Stop, wipe your tears. Listen, Marousia . . . I have forgiven you, you must also forgive me. It is probably all my own fault in not having brought you up properly. I shan't live long. . . . Send for the priest, Father Grigory. . . ."

The confession took place in the evening. The aged priest with long gray hair and grizzly beard read the prayers before him and tears stood in his eyes when he left the room. He came up to Marousia who had been waiting for him.

"I know," he said with kindness, "that you have left God, but you should believe in Him. Your father has a pure soul and he asked me to tell you that you should not be offended with him."

"I believe, . . . " said Marousia, bending her head.—"I believe in God and I hope that He will forgive me. . . ."

The priest laid his hand in blessing on Marousia's head and left.

Lubovin died the same night. Marousia had been sitting in an arm-chair near his bed. She had dozed for a moment during the night and felt startled, when she awoke, by the uncanny silence that reigned in the room. Her father's hoarse breathing was no longer to be heard. The candle which had been lit in the farthest corner so as not to trouble Lubovin, had burnt out and the room was in full darkness. Marousia lit a candle and

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approached her father's bed. He was lying on his back. His head was buried deep in the pillows. The nose looked sharp, pointed and white. The eyes were closed, the lips were firmly pressed together and had a bluish tint. Marousia touched his hand—it was already cold.

Marousia went to the dining room where Korjikoff was sleeping on a sofa.

"Fedor Fedorovitch," she said,—“father is dead.”

"Ah," Korjikoff said rising,—“That was to be expected.”

"What are we to do?" Marousia asked weeping.

"Arrange for a funeral," Korjikoff answered calmly,—“the usual proceedings.”

The necessary formalities were accomplished in the morning and Marousia accompanied the coffin to the Ochtensky cemetery.

She had to remain in bed after her return. The anguish which, owing to her, her father had experienced on his death-bed had deeply afflicted her. Her marriage, the rejection of her dreams of a free life, of the education of her future prince according to her wishes,—all had been done only for the purpose of not letting her father know what had happened. She had not succeeded in this and he had died unhappy. Perhaps the real reason of his death had been the disgrace that had befallen his family, which had been his pride and to which he had devoted the whole of his life.

Korjikoff had come to live in Lubovin's house. His constant attention touched Marousia. They often discussed the future, the principles on which her child should be brought up and Marousia discovered that Korjikoff had formed definite plans in this respect. He never spoke openly of them, only hinting sometimes that Marousia's child would become a leader of the socialistic movement. In his opinion it did not matter whether it were a boy or a girl. He shared Marousia's belief that the child would be physically as beautiful as his young and healthy parents, who had passionately loved each other.

"Power and boldness, the spirit of initiative of the father and the kind heart of the mother shall be blended together in him,"

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Korjikoff used to say.—“It will lie with us to bring him up so that he shall love the proletariat, and absorb our principles from childhood, that he shall not be poisoned by the Bible and that he shall hate the nobles.”

Marousia did not feel strong enough then to fight her husband, but she foresaw a fierce struggle in the future. She would bring up Sablin's child quite differently.

“He shall wear a sword at his side,” she thought,—“as all the Sablins have done. . . .”

### LXV

SABLIN thought that Fate, unseen powers and his guardian angel were arranging everything for him so that he saw only the pleasant side of life and could fully enjoy it. The idea never entered his head that the Petersburg society had taken an interest in his private affairs and that Princess Repnin had decided that it was time to marry off the young man. She had talked the matter over with Baroness Wolff, an old friend of hers, and the latter agreed to assist in bringing about Sablin's marriage with her daughter.

The Baron intended to visit his estate and orange groves in the Caucasus and it was decided that the whole family should pass the spring at Batoum. Sablin's affair hastened their departure. Everything was anticipated by the Princess and arranged for in advance. She gave Sablin a letter to her cousin, a Governor of a province in the Caucasus, and requested that he should hand it over personally at Novorossisk.

The Governor received Sablin rather coldly. The province was a new one, the town was under construction and the Residence only half finished. The arrival of a young handsome guardsman with a letter from the influential and power-loving Princess Repnin seemed most suspicious. The Governor was afraid that he would be asked to take him into the Civil Service, but he had no use whatever for a young miscreant who had been expelled from the Guards. He opened the letter with a business-like gesture without excusing himself, but immediately

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became amiable when he had finished reading it and invited Sablin to a five o'clock tea at the Residence.

"You will make the acquaintance of the local society," he said.—"It may be you will meet some people you have known at Petersburg. Please tell the charming Princess when you return, that her requests are law to me."

The Governor rose, giving Sablin to understand that he was busy and would be glad to see him leave.

Tea was served in the drawing room and on the balcony of the Residence, from which could be seen the harbour, surrounded by white snow-peaked mountains. The sea had a dark blue colour in the distance and a green tint nearer the shore. The sky was blue, the February sun rather hot and the ladies wore white dresses with bunches of violets. Many people of the most different types were present. Georgian waiters, clad in dark "tcherkesskas" glided noiselessly among the guests serving tea and fruit.

Sablin heard a familiar voice and looked 'round.

"Tea with bananas? How delightful," the voice said.

It was Baroness Vera Constantinovna talking to the hostess. He approached them.

"What are you doing here, Vera Constantinovna?" he said.

"Father wants to buy a summer residence here and we are all with him."

"I will leave you dear Vera," said the hostess. "I have to go and make myself pleasant to the professor."

She joined a middle-sized man with quick eyes and a curly beard which had never known a razor, who was presently gesticulating and saying:

"Yes, Maria Lvovna,—Your husband shall become a new Jason. He will extract gold from these grey rocks. Not gold in the literary meaning of the word, but the golden fruits of subtropical vegetation. Have you received my latest samples? I hope that next year we shall drink tea from our own Chakvinsky plantations."

"Won't you go with us?" said Vera Constantinovna to Sablin. "We are going to book our passage tomorrow and leave the day



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after. We shall sail on the steamer "The Grand Duke Constantine to Batoum and shall visit Gagri, Sotchi, Adler and some other places on the way. It promises to be most interesting."

"You are going to seek the Golden Fleece, Baroness," said a stout Armenian coming up to them with a cup of tea in his hands.—"Your father is starting a good business. You will become a Golden Fleece yourself when you arrive there with your golden hair. All the Argonauts will sail after you."

"Colchis," the voice of the professor was heard saying—"certainly it is the Colchis of the ancients. I understand the Greeks who had their villas built here for rest. You will see a magical country, Maria Lvovna. Something is always blossoming there. Now? Now, the mimosa is in bloom, the azalea and many others. February is the worst time of the year but still the country is full of magical beauty."

Sablin listened to the fragments of conversation. He heard familiar names: "Count Witte has purchased some land at Sotchi," someone was saying,—"yes, not far from Botkin's villa, slightly higher up than that of the Prince of Oldenburg. And where is yours?"

"I haven't decided yet between Gagri and Batoum."

"Choose Mahindjaoury, next to me."

"Why does everything go so nicely with me?" thought Sablin. "Why does Fate send me one gift after another? Kitty, Marousia. . . . Hardly does one thing end when something else comes, and grows up in its place. A short while ago he had parted with Marousia and now Vera Constantinovna was appearing with a beautiful new country as background. The Golden Fleece! He would become an Argonaut and would try to find it.

For a moment Lubovin's pale wrathful face rose before him.

"Scoundrel! . . ." the insulting words came back.

But they faded away. The regiment, Prince Repnin, Gritzenko and Steepochka had shielded him from Lubovin. And once more Sablin's heart was filled by a warm feeling of love

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and gratitude to the Emperor, to the order of things he had created, and to the regiment in which life was so easy.

### LXVI

BLUE waves ran towards the steamer and broke against its high black sides. The sun was bright and hot. Merry young porpoises showed their dark backs and vanished, only to appear again once more casting the blue water up into foam that sparkled under the rays of the sun.

The coast could be seen from the port side. The blue waters were bordered by mountains rising in high white cliffs or sloping down in steep valleys covered by thick woods.

Sablin was sitting on a bench in the stern, Vera Constantinovna, reclined in an easy chair opposite him, reading.

The wind played with her golden hair, tickling her nose and made her frown. Sablin also had a book but he had laid it aside long ago and was watching the beautiful view of the sea and the mountains.

Suddenly the girl put down her book: "I believe my hair is in an awful state," she said, and made a movement to rise.

"Stay for a minute longer. I want to talk to you."

"To talk? We have done nothing else these two days."

"This time I would like to talk seriously about life."

"About life?"

"Yes, why some people have so many pleasures and are surrounded by happiness, life seeming to be one great festivity arranged for their benefit, while others dwell in poverty, misery and grief?"

"Because they were born for that and then you must remember that 'to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.'"

"Well, what shall be required of me?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it will be in the war where you will have to suffer physically and spiritually. I think that our Emperor is so kind to you officers in peace-time just because he knows how hard it will be for you in case of war."

"But if there should be no war? And then the soldiers ought

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to be even more petted than the officers if one looks at things as you do."

"Who can foretell the future? Take myself. I am so happy. I love outdoors, hunting, the sea, the people, my relatives; and my life is one perpetual joyful holiday. We went with Sonia to a fortune teller a week ago. We saw her advertisement in the papers, put on our worst clothes and called at her flat. And you know, it was perfectly wonderful! She told us who we were, all about my character, where I had studied, that I was attending the Court and that I would soon be married and have two children—a boy and a girl. But then she wrung her hands and said: 'Oh! What an awful end awaits you, my young lady. I won't tell you what it will be. Perhaps I am wrong but our science is never mistaken.' She was uncannily exact in all she said and even told me that I was going to have an interesting journey soon after!"

"I suppose she had the appearance of an old witch, this fortune teller?"

"No, she was quite a young girl, very thin, pale and handsome. She had finished her school only two years previously, had studied books on chiromancy and earned her bread by the knowledge she had acquired. She is a believer. Ikons adorned her room and candles were burning before them. She said that the fate of every man and the pathways of his life are laid down by God. A guardian angel is appointed to see him through and so that he should not forget what is to happen, all the future life of a man is written down on the palms of his hands as if they were books. Every night the angel comes, looks at our hands and says: 'Tomorrow this should happen, but he must be saved from that.'"

"Do you really believe in all this. Vera Constantinovna? One would then have to give up the belief that human will is free. A crime would not then be a crime, a great deed would no longer be great and . . . and an insult would not be an insult."

"I don't know. But she was wonderfully exact in all she said about my past. I am sure that if you think of the past days of

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your life you will also probably find that you have not always acted as you would have liked to. There are cases when one intends to do something but does not manage it and is sorry about it afterwards."

Sablin thought of Marousia. Had he not been blind in never once thinking to connect her name with that of the soldier of his squadron? Why had he been so perplexed and done nothing after Lubovin's insult? It had all been for the best. Lubovin had disappeared; now he was travelling with this charming girl, who was his equal. It was so easy to chat with her. She touched the chords of his heart which vibrated in response without being strained.

It had been different with Marousia. The souls of both had then undergone a great strain. Their hearts had been ablaze and Sablin never knew where love ended and where class differences began. Sometimes Sablin had felt a chill come over his soul as he strolled down the quays at daybreak with Marousia. But could he ever experience a similar feeling towards this wonderful girl? Her head was leaning back dreamily resting on a cushion and her blue eyes reflected the blue of the sky. She was a woman but he did not think of her as a woman. She was first of all a Baroness of straight descent from the Dukes of Kurland. Her intimate life was full of mystery for him. The Wolffs occupied four cabins and they were accompanied by an English lady. When she used to bid him good night in the evening in the presence of Miss Proctor and descend to her cabin, he could not follow her even in his thoughts. But he often thought of the words of Sofia Constantinovna who had told him that the love of an intellectually developed woman married to a man of her own social standing, was quite different from that of other women.

A steward dressed in a blue jacket and white trousers appeared on deck and struck the luncheon gong.

"Come, we must wash our hands," said Vera Constantinovna and ran lightly down the gangway.

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### LXVII

THE steamer rolled heavily, its bows burying themselves in the waves. Silvery spray flew over them, voices were drowned in the roar of the waves and the wailing of the wind in the steel rigging. The captain, muffled up in his black naval overcoat, paced up and down the bridge glancing at the stars and the ship's compass, humming a tune and from time to time entering the pilot house. Sablin and Vera Constantinovna sat under the bridge wrapped up in one large rug. They were gazing at the full moon which was floating over the sea and at the snowy peaks glistening under its rays.

"Are you afraid, Vera Constantinovna?" asked Sablin.

"Not in the least. Do you hear the captain humming overhead? It must be all right then. The stormy sea is so beautiful."

"Won't you get scolded for remaining so long on deck?"

"There is no one to do it. They are all groaning in their cabins. Mother is asleep, Miss Proctor is snoring and Sonia is almost weeping. But I feel very happy."

"So do I."

"Isn't it clever of us!"

"I am marvelling at you, Vera Constantinovna."

"Look at the moon and don't marvel at me. I am the descendant of knights," Vera Constantinovna said, rolling the 'r' in the Russian word 'knight.'

"A fine descendant who cannot pronounce the word."

"Oh, shut up. I have been sufficiently worried at school because of my 'r.'"

"Why don't you try to carry a stone in your mouth as Pericles did."

"Demosthenes, and not Pericles."

"Only to think that you were the best pupil in your class. Of course it was Pericles."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You an officer! What do you teach your soldiers!"

"Well, tell me then who was Socrates."



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"He was a learned man, a philosopher. He lived in a barrel and went 'round during the day carrying a lantern and seeking a man."

"You are wrong."

"Excuse me, sir, I am never wrong."

"Socrates was a horse of the second squadron on the right flank of my section."

"What nonsense you do talk! Do you love horses?"

"Very much."

"What is the name of yours?"

"Mirabeau. I had it purchased in Ireland."

"Mine is called 'Carmen' and what a darling she is! I like dogs too, but I hate cats, they are such mean creatures."

Thus they continued to chatter jumping from one topic to another and saying nothing important, but neither Sablin nor Vera Constantinova could go to sleep in their cabins afterwards.

Later, after both had gone below Sablin dreamt of the Baroness and did not know what he would like most. To sail over seas, to gallop over the steppes on thoroughbred horses, to dance, to sing to her or to sit at a window of some magical castle, gazing at the moon.

His life was running like a dream. They had been at sea for two days, had visited Gagri, Novi Afon, Poti and had spent three weeks at Batoum. Every day they had driven out into the country in a carriage drawn by a pair of brisk horses. The old Baron had his land measured, verified plans, counted trees and was cross with Vera, Sofia and Sablin when they were inattentive in translating to him what Russians, Georgians and Turks said. He purchased plants, stone, cement, talked to the architect, inspectors and Turkish workmen, shouted, stamped his feet and rushed up and down his estate dragging Sablin after him and explaining all his plans and intentions.

Generally the Baron was pleased with his day's work, had drinks served, often slapped Sablin on the knee and told in German long tales about his service in the Prussian lancers when he had been acquainted with General Rosenberg, the General "Vorwärts." He called Sablin "thou" and "Sasha."

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But everything has an end. The Baron suddenly told Sablin on a rainy dark evening that he considered that everything on the estate had been started in a satisfactory manner, that he had arranged for his brother-in-law and Sablin to be his business partners and that it was time to return home. The ploughing season would soon begin at his other estate "The White House," near Petersburg and he wanted to reach it in time to shoot wood-cocks as the spring was an early one that year.

"I would like you, Alexander Nicolaievitch," he told Sablin in German,—“to stay here three months for me until the construction of the house and planting of the tea and the orange groves is finished. Herr professor has promised to help you, and I believe you had no other plans with which this would interfere.”

"Naturally," Vera Constantinovna said, "Alexander Nicolaievitch will stay here. He has promised to arrange a beautiful rose-garden for me."

Sablin looked at Vera Constantinovna, at the stout Baron, and . . . agreed.

### LXVIII

SABLIN lodged at an hotel at Batoum and every morning left by motor launch or by rail for the Green Cape, where the Baron's estate was situated. He stayed there the whole day and sometimes the night, sleeping out-of-doors in the garden. He bathed in the sea in the mornings, stayed for some time on the beach admiring the scenery and returned to the estate by a path through the woods. The work advanced rapidly there. Masons were building the house. Dark Georgians, naked to the waist and bare-foot, walked quietly to and fro, carrying stones or rolling barrels of cement. In another place beams and boards were being planed. Handsome Turks in dark fezzes were planting trees and bushes somewhat lower down the slope. Work was in full swing everywhere. Each man seemed to know what he had to do, each man went home in the evening physically tired but humming a merry tune and happy with the work he had accomplished. Sablin alone felt out of place. He wanted

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to help, but what could he do? Men carried plants, the roots wrapped in matting, and fixed them in round holes dug in the ground. Sablin looked on but did not know whether it was being done correctly or not.

The name of the professor whom Sablin had met at the Novorossisk residence was being spoken of everywhere in those days. He was arranging some wonderful plantations near Chakva, where the flora of the whole world was to be assembled.

Sablin went to pay him a call and found the professor at work. He was wearing a light suit and walked between rows of small bushes with dark sharp-pointed leaves. A chinaman in a blue suit accompanied him. He greeted Sablin cordially and took him 'round the plantations. "They are not just a mere pastime, these plantations," the professor was saying.—"It shall be a place through which Russia shall realise what a precious gem the Batoum district is. All that a man needs can grow here. All that we have had to import from abroad, paying high prices. It shall be our own now. Our own tea, lemons, oranges, sugar cane and rubber. My ambition is to organise it all so that anyone could come here and study the methods of the work. These plantations shall be useful for the whole region."

They sat down on a bench which stood on the edge of the cliff.

The sea murmured below them. Blue and transparent it fringed the shore with a thin line of white foam. The beach appeared rose-coloured from this height owing to the blocks of granite and marble with which it was strewn. Green grass grew higher up the slope. The mountains here retired from the sea shore, forming the beautiful valley of the river Chakva. The red hills surrounding it were covered with symmetrical lines of small bushes. Broad roads bordered with trees crossed the valley in several places, small houses of Georgian workmen clung to the slopes. It was the Chakvinsky tea plantation. Below Sablin's feet stretched a level terrace covered with green grass and trees of pink acacia with rose-bushes among them. It was a huge rose-garden. The fragrance of the blossoming

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roses floated up with gusts of the sea breeze. Ridges of violet mountains formed the background of this broad panorama. They had a dark colour lower down owing to the thick forests which covered their bases but the bluish summits disappeared in the misty distance. The snow-peaks of the Caucasian mountains glimmered there, transparent as clouds and sparkling like opals. The snowy crest of Elbruz dominated all.

"I never tire of gazing at this view," said the professor.—"It is always beautiful and none is equal to it in the whole world. I have admired the Nagasaki harbour, I have seen the southern beauty of the Bosphorus and the northern splendour of Stockholm, I have been in America and have watched the mighty roll of the waves in the Indian ocean at Colombo, but nowhere have I met the same full harmony of rich shades of the sea, of the luxurious colours of the lands and the mountains and of the sky constantly furrowed by clouds. I am happy that I am a pioneer here, that I have studied this region and I am spreading its fame.

"Some think that humanity shall be happy only when personal freedom and equality before the law is attained, others demand full freedom and full equality in all respects, some preach anarchy. But happiness is to be attained only through work which must be creative. A slave toiling on the soil can be happy by creating beauty, while a free idler can commit suicide, disappointed with his freedom deprived of creative work. You must have noticed how happy are all the people with a spark of talent in them—painters, poets, architects, sculptors, writers and artists. They can create! For years they bear their future creations in their hearts and are seized by uncommon excitement when they start to bring it into existence. They forget about food, they do not think of the comforts of their body and live only with the images rising out of their thoughts. . . . Even simple bootmakers, carpenters, tailors have their moments of happiness because they create. The results of their work may be only trifles, but they are creations.

"I am now creating these gardens. Everyone who creates,

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whatever trifle it may be, bears in his breast an atom of the Divine Intelligence and is as happy as God."

"Then we, who serve in the Army, can never be happy," said Sablin.

"Why?"

"Because the very purpose of our existence is the destruction of culture. Burning towns and villages, trampled fields, plunder of the inhabitants and death of the enemy,—all this is brought by war. I have never seen the painting of a battle which did not have flames as a background. There can be no happiness in the military service."

The professor remained silent. The leaves of great poplars rustled quietly overhead, the sea murmured below, telling something about the earth, and the warm air was full of a strong perfume of roses.

"I think that you are wrong," said the professor. "You have been thinking only of the process of war. Look at these blocks of splintered rock, look at these deep holes in the ground where seeds shall be planted. They have an ugly appearance for the moment and symbolise destruction, but we shall marvel at the beauty of the plants which shall grow here. Wars can be creative and they can be destructive. The war of Liberation of 1877-78 was terrible. I remember tales I have heard about the valour of our soldiers at Shipka, the terrible march over the Balkan mountains, the typhus which raged in the valley of the Maritza and on the shores of the Black Sea, but that war brought liberty to the Serbians, Bulgarians and Montenegrins, that war gave us this fertile region and see how it develops under the Russian rule. Only maize grew here in the days of the Turks and we are now reconstructing the glory of the gardens which were here in the days of Rome and Byzantium. No, you are wrong. There is a creative element in war and happiness can be found in it. It is the happiness of victory. Create a victorious Russian army," said the professor, raising his voice,—"train our soldiers so that no enemy would dare to attack us, defend this creation of mine, defend it from the lazy Turks, from the rapacious Georgians and from anyone who would ven-



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ture to lay unclean hands upon it. Create a real army worthy of Russia, an army which would remember the purpose of its existence and you will be happy. Every day of peace shall be a reward for your creative work!"

The professor rose. He seemed greatly excited.

"Such a lot is spoken nowadays about peace," he said. "It makes me feel nervous, because it means war. I would be far more at ease if more thought were devoted to possible conflicts and if preparations were made for them. Everyone would desire this little paradise in case of war and my gardens would then perish. Defend them, Alexander Nicolaievitch, I am afraid for them. . . ."

### LXIX

SABLIN received a wire from Gritzenko in August: "Commander Petrovsky. All on new lines. Return." He did not wait for his leave to expire but handed the estate over to a manager, a cousin of Wolff sent down by him, and left for Petersburg.

He felt glad as the train approached the Capital. There were three reasons for this. First of all he was glad to be soon in the company of his regimental friends, the dark-eyed Gritzenko, the ruddy Rotbek, serious Fetisoff and the cynical Matzneff; he was glad that he would soon be surrounded by tall handsome soldiers clad in the familiar uniform, see his favourite horses, hear the clinking of spurs in the streets and the flowing tune of the regimental march.

The second pleasure he anticipated was a visit to the Wolff estate, "The White House," after the manœuvres. He would meet Vera Constantinovna there and intended to make a proposal if he had not been mistaken and the girl's heart was free. The Baron and the Baroness had heartily invited him to come and stay with them, and Vera Constantinovna had written him a nice note.

The third reason was a longing for creative work which would bring him happiness. He wanted to help in the creation

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of the army and in the preparation of victory. The words of the professor had greatly impressed him.

The army was not preparing itself for war. "We won't live to witness one. There has been enough fighting as it is," was the general motto. Sablin had three pairs of patent leather shoes, but he would not have known what to put on and his feet would have been frozen if he had had to ride out in the frost. There were no fur coats for the soldiers and the officers. The Quartermaster's stores were full of heavy brass helmets and cuirasses, but the regiment would have to start on a winter march clad in light caps. The horses were fat and unfit for long marches.

Feverish activity reigned in the East and the West. Military agents and ordinary tourists reported new discoveries in the art of warfare and of gigantic programmes for armaments, but everything continued to slumber in Russia. The magazine rifle was the only innovation, after which the army settled down to its old routine. Reforms consisted only in alterations of the uniforms and in the introduction of coloured caps.

How could Sablin work creatively in a regiment whose only purpose was the maintenance of order in the capital? The Guard Corps had been sent to the front in 1877-78, but their regiment had remained at Petersburg. Perhaps the same thing will happen in the next war, said some of the officers. But Sablin wanted to work even in his modest capacity of a section commander.

He arrived at the regiment two days before the manœuvres and inspected the quarters of the men on the next day. He found disorder everywhere and reprimanded the section corporal. He came to the grooming of the horses at half past five the following morning. The section corporal reported five minutes later, the sergeant coming after him.

"What is he after?" thought the sergeant. "I would have understood if it had happened after a night of revelry, but he seems to be quite sober. He has apparently got up specially for this purpose. Is he trying to make up to the new Commander?"

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The soldiers also disapproved of the change in Sablin. They considered it much better for themselves when officers left the task of supervision to the corporals and sergeants and behaved as nobles should. Everything was much simpler then.

Sablin began to notice grim looks on the faces of the soldiers, but he continued to work on the same lines. Gritzenko told him: "Don't be too hot-headed, the sergeant and the corporal can manage everything." Rotbek remarked that he did not consider it worth while to trouble his noble head with such nonsense because the soldiers themselves knew what they had to do. But Sablin persisted.

The regiment had to reconnoitre the river Strelka during the manoeuvres. It was necessary to draw a map of it at the request of the Headquarters of the Inspecting General. The new Commander of the regiment, a young General of the General Staff, summoned the adjutant.

"Tell Lieutenant Sablin to draw up this map," he said.

The adjutant, Captain Samalsky, had been accustomed to issue orders independently under the command of Drevenitz and remarked respectfully:

"It is impossible to send Sablin, Your Excellency. An officer of a quite different type would be needed here. Sablin would be good as orderly officer or in the guard, but I don't think he could do this work satisfactorily. It would be better to send Captain Grüntal, the instructing officer of the educational section."

"Send Lieutenant Sablin," said the Commander of the regiment.

"Yes, Your Excellency, but . . ." began Samalsky.

"I have spoken," the General replied curtly.

"There will be a row," thought the adjutant, transmitting the order to Sablin. "I can imagine the appearance this river will have in the interpretation of our dear Sasha. I suppose I shall have to accompany him to the guard-house afterwards.

But Sablin took the matter differently. This simple sketch would be his first creation. The first one after his conversation with the professor. Straining his will and his memory he tried

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to recollect all that he had been taught, took the necessary implements, mounted his horse at three o'clock in the morning and rode away accompanied by an orderly. He started to work with the first rays of the sun. The day was a fine one. The August sun poured its rays on the high grass which covered the banks of the dreamy river. Sablin left his horse with the orderly and went down the river on foot, verifying its curves by a compass. He marked the bridges, laid them out in cross section and added explanatory notes. Hours passed but he did not think of the time. He had some milk and black bread at a water mill, enjoying the meal more than he would have enjoyed a supper at a first class restaurant.

Women were bathing not far away; their laughter and cries were heard but he never once glanced in the direction whence they came. His arms and his feet were aching with fatigue, but he did not feel it. He was happy. He was creating. The river was appearing in all its details on a large sheet of paper ruled out into inches by lines forming pale green squares. Fording places were marked,—he had verified and measured their depth. Bridges were flung over it. A large stone bridge, the main road passing over it, a wooden one near the mill and a small plank bridge for foot traffic lower down. Sablin had forgotten nothing and the picture on the paper was clear. Sablin felt proud of his work.

He rejoined the regiment late in the evening after covering seventy versts, and reported to the Commander who was still working in a cottage with the adjutant.

General Petrovsky scanned the plan with attention.

"It is the work of a Staff Officer," he said meditatively. "Lieutenant Sablin, I thank you in the name of the service."

Petrovsky turned to the adjutant when Sablin had left.

"What were you telling me yesterday? He is an excellent officer in all respects."

"He seems to have changed greatly during his leave," thought the adjutant.

Sablin felt happy when he walked briskly to his room, not realising his weariness. "Yes," he thought,—“the professor

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was right. Happiness lies in creative work whatever it may be. . . .”

### LXX

SABLIN did not use the permission to return home by rail after the manœuvres but of his own free will rode back with the regiment. He was the senior of the lieutenants present and led the unit. He covered the distance in three days and rode into the yard of the barracks towards noon of the fourth day, the troopers following him in full order. Cold thin rain was pattering gloomily.

The regiment lined itself up in the yard and the men leading the horses of those who had already arrived by rail trotted into the stables. Sablin raised his sword over his head and ordered:

“To the colours! Draw sabres! Present sabres!”

He experienced at first a feeling of pride and happiness when the band played the majestic Guard March and a N.C.O., a young lieutenant walking before him, splashed through the pools of water in the yard bearing the regimental colours wrapped in a leather cover with a large metal two-headed eagle on the staff.

The instruments of the incomplete band—the best musicians had left by rail—sounded hoarsely in the damp air. The colours had an indifferent appearance in their cover.

A poignant feeling of sadness overwhelmed Sablin suddenly. The small squadrons in which many men were absent had a miserable appearance. The troopers were drenched through and looked weary and gloomy. The grey sky of Petersburg and the roar of its traffic were oppressing them.

“What if all of it is untrue?” thought Sablin,—“the regiment, the colours, the military service and Russia. If sadness, slime and rain alone exist in reality.”

He let the men go, and returned in a gloomy mood to his flat. Everything had been altered in his rooms so that nothing would remind him of Marousia and of Lubovin. Sablin changed his wet clothes, went to the Mess where he found only two young lieutenants who had been his companions and on his return stretched himself out on a sofa and fell asleep.



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He was leaving at nine for "The White House," where his fate would be decided.

At five he was awake again dressed and hastily began to pack.

The orderly who had replaced Sherstobitoff was preparing tea in the dining room. "After tea," thought Sablin,—*"I shall drive to Ballé and Ivanoff and purchase the sweets she and her mother prefer. . . ."*

A long sharp peal of the electric bell sounded in the hall. The orderly went to open the door.

"A civilian wishes to see you, Your Honour," said the orderly. "An intrusive looking fellow."

"Who is he?" asked Sablin.

"A student, perhaps, or some petitioner. Perhaps he's a creditor."

Sablin had no debts. He shrugged his shoulders, put on his tunic and said, going towards his study: "Ask him to come in."

The orderly introduced the visitor into the study. He was a short man, all in brown. A much worn brown suit, brown beard and hair ruffled and wet,—all were of the same colour and shade. He resembled an old sparrow who had just had a bath in a pool of dirty water. He had an irritated and offended expression and his head was slightly bent on one side—quite like that of a wet sparrow.

Sablin continued to stand behind his writing table and gazed questioningly at the visitor. He did not ask him to sit down and did not shake hands. The orderly remained in the study expecting to be summoned to throw the intruder out.

"Whom have I the honour to meet?" Sablin said coldly.

"I am Korjikoff," said the visitor fixing the gaze of his sad, inflamed eyes on Sablin. He seemed drunk.

"What can I do for you?" asked Sablin.

"Hell, there is nothing to be afraid of. Send your damned soldier away," Korjikoff said nervously.

"Petrenko, leave us," Sablin said, shrugging his shoulders. "There can be no secrets between us!"

The orderly suddenly left the study and remained in the dining room where he began to shift cups and plates noisily so

as to manifest his presence. Korjikoff came nearer and said quietly, his lips hardly moving:

"Maria Mihailovna Lubovina asks you to come to her immediately."

Sablin continued to stand in silence, a frown creeping over his face. It had all been forgotten and was so unnecessary now! Korjikoff noticed this.

"She is dying," he said abruptly,—“and wants to bid you farewell. . . . Come!” he shouted imperatively—“every minute is precious, come!”

"Who are you? . . . Why has Maria Mihailovna sent you?" Sablin asked growing pale.

"Oh! What does it matter to you? I am the husband of Maria Mihailovna. . . . Do you hear! I am her husband. She has begged me to bring you to her!"

Sablin looked once more at Korjikoff.

No, he was speaking the truth. There was no anger or hatred in his eyes but only limitless grief. Sablin shrugged his shoulders once more and went to the hall to put on his overcoat.

## LXXI

THE cab in which Korjikoff had arrived was waiting outside. Steam rose from the tired horse and the izvostchik himself, clad in a wet oil skin coat, paced up and down the pavement.

They got into the carriage. Both were silent. Sablin felt uncomfortable in his elegant new overcoat and coloured cap at the side of this man who sat huddled up in a corner. "The husband and lover drive together,"—thought Sablin and a feeling of disgust came over him. "What must he feel towards me," Sablin continued to think, and became more and more downcast. "Why have I agreed to accompany him? He will bring me to Marousia, who is really suffering perhaps and will say: See what you have brought about. He will shower reproaches on me."

The rain continued to patter and the pavements were covered by black spots of umbrellas. Sablin noticed every surrounding detail of that drive. Great post wagons painted yellow and

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black clattered past them near the Nicolaievsky station drawn by teams of powerful horses. Several men lay on the tarpaulins covering the mail and were joking about something.

"Why do I notice all this?" Sablin thought. "Perhaps I see it all for the last time if this mysterious Korjikoff is luring me into a trap where Lubovin would meet me instead of Marousia. They would overpower me easily,—I have forgotten to take my revolver." For a moment he had a desire to jump out of the carriage, but felt ashamed of proving his cowardice and glanced sideways at his companion. He was sitting quietly in his corner and seemed to be deep in gloomy thoughts. His face had such a sad expression and his general appearance was so weak and insignificant that Sablin almost laughed at his apprehensions. He began to think of Marousia. Was it true that she was dying? What could her illness have been? Perhaps she only wanted to see him once more and had invented this story so as to induce him to come. Where could her brother be? Evidently his companion knew all, but it was impossible to question him. "It's lucky that it is raining," thought Sablin. "We would have looked fine together in the same carriage."

Husband and lover.

He tried to bring Marousia back to his memory but her features had grown dim and had been replaced by those of Vera Constantinovna. Only a recollection of something tender and passionate remained. The last scene was the only vivid one. Lubovin dressed in a great-coat, his rough hands seizing the collar of his shirt, the insult and the revolver report. "How depressing it all is," thought Sablin. "I hope this will be the last I hear of the whole affair. Our drive seems endless."

They were on the outskirts of the town. Dirty ditches bordered the road, the houses were small and built out of wood, surrounded in some places by small gardens with miserable willow and birch trees. Korjikoff stopped the izvostchik at last, paid him and rang the bell at the door of a small house with three windows opening on the street.

Sablin waiting behind, had a feeling of numbness. The idea had now come to him that it was he who should have paid the

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izvostchik and not this man, evidently poor, that it would be difficult to find a carriage for him afterwards in this distant quarter and that he should have told this one to wait. He was following Korjikoff mechanically.

An old grey-haired woman opened the door. Korjikoff entered first, then Sablin. He found himself in a narrow room hung with old yellow wall paper. A large chest covered by a rug stood in a corner, a mirror hung on the wall. The smell of cabbage and onions came from the kitchen. Sablin followed Korjikoff's example and took off his overcoat and cap. The mirror reflected his elegant form clad in a well-cut tunic and tight fitting breeches. It seemed quite out of place in the surroundings.

"Well?" Korjikoff asked in an anxious whisper, addressing the old woman who stood supporting her chin with her fist and looking at Sablin.

"She's calmer now. She's been afraid that you would arrive too late. I'm afraid she won't last much longer."

"Come," said Korjikoff. They passed through the dining room, where the table was covered with a clean white cloth. Geraniums stood on the window sill and a canary hopped about in a cage.

"Wait a moment," Korjikoff whispered and walked on tip-toe into the next room.

Sablin's heart was beating wildly—he would be in Marousia's presence in a few seconds. What would she look like? The stinging smell of cabbage and onions irritated him and prevented him from thinking of Marousia as he would have liked to. He continued to hold his cap in his hands according to the military custom and twitched it nervously. The minutes appeared very long accompanied by the tick-tack of a large clock which hung on the wall.

"Come in," Korjikoff said. The room they entered was plunged in semi-darkness. The white curtains were drawn and the light of the grey autumn day hardly penetrated through them. An iron bedstead stood near the wall. Marousia lay on it, her head resting on low white pillows. Her pale face, sur-

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rounded by the loose dark hair, had a ghostly appearance. Her delicate nose had become sharp, the lips were only just noticeable as thin violet lines. Only the large blue eyes which were fixed on Sablin were full of life. She raised her thin white hands towards him as if wishing to clasp him in her arms and said softly:

"So you have come. . . . I knew you would. . . . I am happy now."

Sablin bent over her. She clasped her arms 'round his neck and tried to bring his face nearer. Tears touched Sablin's cheeks. She was crying.

"It is nothing, it is nothing," she said,—“look.”

Her eyes pointed in the direction of a large arm chair which stood near to the fire place. A kind of nest was arranged there out of bed linen and on it rested a small wrinkled child who was slowly moving his thin arms and legs like a spider.

"He is yours!" she whispered. "He is yours! Are you happy? Yes! Take him—bring him up! He is yours!"

Sablin looked into Marousia's eyes. The light was fading away in them. Her hands were moving restlessly, the fingers clenching together and relaxing again. As if she were trying to find something on the bed cover and wanted to clutch it.

The shade of the eyes became of a paler blue, the pupil was becoming smaller. But love was still reflected in them.

"My prince!" Marousia whispered with passion and anguish. "My prince . . ." she wept. The lips uncovered two rows of white clenched teeth. Sablin stooped down to kiss them. They were cold and stiff. Sablin shuddered and drew back.

The lips moved again. Marousia raised herself a little, her face took on an expression of frigid marble beauty, her hair covering her thin white neck.

"My prince!" was heard once more faintly. She fell back on the pillows and remained motionless. Her eyes opened once more, but there was no life in them. They had a dull misty colour. The eye-lashes shuddered slightly and shaded the eyelids which closed together.



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Sablin stood there not knowing what to do. Korjikoff sobbed nervously near the door.

He approached Marousia's bed and crossed her arms on her breast. The child moved and cried in the arm chair.

"Go away! Go away instantly," Korjikoff exclaimed, looking at Sablin with terrible hatred. "Do you hear me? Go away!"

Sablin turned and tip-toed out of the room. Korjikoff followed him. Sablin halted in the dining room. The cries of the child were heard from the bed room.

"But my child?" he said looking at Korjikoff. "She asked. . . ."

"What!" exclaimed Korjikoff, clenching his fists. "He will never be yours. I have been her lawful husband and according to the law the child is mine. Do you understand? What are you, after all this? What can one call you?"

Sablin said nothing. He did not know what course of action to take.

"Well!" Korjikoff shouted with fury. "Do you intend to remain here much longer? Clear out! Quick!"

Sablin turned and walked away. The silvery tinkle of his spurs sounded vulgar and out of place, the canary fluttered in its cage as if also wanting to hurry his departure. The metal shoulder straps of his overcoat glittered provokingly in the ante-room. Sablin felt depressed by the absurdity of all that had taken place. He put on his overcoat hurriedly and left the house.

Cold rain continued to patter. The dark road was covered by pools of water and not a single izvostchik was in sight. Sablin walked hastily along the slippery boards of the pathway. He could not think of the events he had just witnessed, only Marousia's last words full of passionate love and of anguish constantly sounded in his ears and flashed through his brain.

"My prince! My prince! . . ."

## PART II



## I

THE WINTER PALACE was brightly illuminated. All four entrances,—the Commandant's, Her Majesty's, the Saltikovsky and the Jordansky,—were open and footman in livery with huge staffs in their hands stood before each surrounded by servants and messengers in red coats. A continuous stream of coaches drawn by big grey Russian horses drove up to the Saltikoff entrance, and elegantly dressed ladies and young girls, their evening gowns covered simply by furs or light silk "sorties de bal," jumped out of them. The carriage would move slowly away, the snow crackling under the wheels and another drawn by black Hanover horses with nervously twitching nostrils would roll up instead. A lady would descend from the carriage accompanied by a statesman in a three cornered hat with plumes or by a General in an open cloak, under which could be seen his breast covered by decorations and with a broad blue or red ribbon slung over his shoulder. As soon as the chilled horses would start at an impatient trot from the entrance, other carriages and sledges would come up in their place. Sometimes a young general dressed in a grey fur cap with the red top of the Imperial Suite and a light beaver cloak would drive up in a light sledge drawn by a fine horse.

"Please, Your Excellency."

"Your cloak, Your Excellency. No ticket is needed, just ask for Iakov. I shall personally look after it," the respectful deep voices of clean shaven servants were heard.

The fragrance of various perfumes coming from the furs, lace and dresses of the ladies, became stronger and stronger in the brightly lit vestibule. The ladies passed before a huge mirror, arranged their hair and made a last inspection of their dresses. The faces of all were rosy, some from the frost, others from skillfully applied paint. The eyes of the younger

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ladies sparkled with excitement and pleasure. They were nervous. It was the first and probably the last palace ball for many of them. The so-called "city ladies," wives and daughters of officials, were invited to certain balls apart from the intimate palace circle, and according to lists carefully prepared beforehand.

Diamonds sparkled in initials pinned to the low cut dresses of the Maids of Honour of Her Majesty and of those who had been the best pupils at the Institute.

"Aunty, do you look me over, is everything in order?" a charming fair young lady was saying, rolling her "r's." She had a beautiful figure with a lovely white neck modestly covered by the tulle and lace of her silk cream-coloured dress on which flowers were painted in water colours.

"Really, Vera, all is in perfect order."

Vera Constantinovna Sablin, born Wolff, a descendant of the dukes of Kurland, was far from being a novice at the Court. She had already been Her Majesty's Maid of Honour for some time, but nevertheless always felt nervous before a ball. She was entranced by the luxury of the Palace, by the young and fresh faces around her. The desire to be better than they were always overwhelmed her. Tall, blue-eyed, with a crown of golden hair and a fresh natural colour in her cheeks at a distance she resembled the young Empress whom she admired and tried to imitate in everything. 🐦

"It's such a pity that Alexander is on duty today, he would have known what to do. He always notices everything, even a speck of dust. He has a military eye, while you, aunty, only repeat that all is perfect and don't notice that the initial brooch has become unpinned!"

"Ah! Vera. . . . I shall arrange that in a moment. Why are you so nervous?"

"Aunty, have you noticed how thin Betristcheff has grown? She looks like a little gypsy now, but she is very beautiful, still. She's desperately in love with Lambin, but he doesn't take the slightest notice of her. He's always galloping about, fighting, rushing off on some wild expedition. Ah, General," she turned



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smiling graciously to a General of the General Staff with a red St. Anne ribbon over his shoulder, who was approaching her respectfully.

"Vera Constantinovna, you are beautiful as usual. Let me kiss your artistic hand before you put your glove on," said the General in a sweet voice.

"You are a dear, Iakov Petrovitch," Vera Constantinovna answered laughing, and holding out her really beautiful hand adorned by magnificent rings with diamonds and opals.

"And where is your husband?"

"He is on duty with His Imperial Majesty."

"What a charming pair you are, seven years have passed and I never cease to admire you. It is seven years since you were married, I believe?"

"Oh! Don't speak of it. My daughter will soon be old enough to become a bride and I'm beginning to feel quite aged."

"Allow me to introduce my friend Nicolai Zaharovitch Samoiloff. He arrived only yesterday from Japan after having lived there for twelve years."

"Oh! It must have been terrible," Vera Constantinovna exclaimed holding out her hand to an old and queer looking Colonel of the General Staff. He had a large, clever looking bald head with a big nose, black, untidily trimmed moustache tinged with grey, a prominent shaven chin and sharp hazel eyes. He was of middle height; his body was badly proportioned and he wore an old, crumpled and ill cut black parade uniform. His top-boots were too big for him and his broad trousers fell in folds over them. His sword swung clumsily at his side and one could see that he had grown unaccustomed to wearing it.

"Ah, voila ce fameux Samoiloff, about whom the whole Court talks at present," Vera Constantinovna thought. Her husband had told her that two days previously this Colonel had greatly troubled the Emperor by his report. "Yes, a man with such a resemblance to a Quasimodo would trouble anyone. A real Japanese—he probably had a Japanese wife, too."

"And you haven't been bored to death there?" she asked.

"Oh, he hadn't any time for that," Iakov Petrovitch Pestret-

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zoff said laughing. "He had a whole harem of geishas at his disposal there."

The Colonel did not reply to this jest which he had already heard several times at the court.

### II

OFFICERS were streaming into the Jordansky entrance. Smart carriages drove up rarely but mostly cabs with steaming, tired horses. Many came on foot. Few wore the broad Nicolaievsky cloaks over their epaulets, but nearly all had put on dark grey overcoats and wrapped in coloured silk handkerchiefs the gilt embroidery on the collars of their parade uniforms. Here there were no ladies or young girls. The huge marble gallery usually adorned by beautiful statues was now full of wooden coat-racks behind which stood soldiers dressed in parade uniforms. They had been detailed on fatigue from the various regiments, the men of each unit forming a separate group. Their eyes were attentively scanning the officers who were streaming past them over the violet carpet, and voices were constantly heard:

"Your Honour, our regiment is here."

"Here, Your Honour, these are our racks."

Their duty was to receive the cloaks and overcoats, stow away the galoshes, and help to put them on after the end of the ball. At the end of the dimly lit marble corridor they could see a bright spot. There the mirrors of the staircase reflected the light of thousands of lamps, reflected the marble, gold, carpets and the multi-coloured swarm of the Tsar's guests sparkling with gold, silver and diamonds as they ascended to his apartments. Savory dishes on silver plate and goblets of wine were carried past them during the supper and the sounds of music and the dull rumble of voices reached them floating down the corridor.

It was all for the gentle folk. The Tsar was there, surrounded by the nobles; and they, the soldiers, had to perform the duties of servants, doze in the corridor near the overcoats and wait for the end.

A crowd of people was streaming up the white marble stair-

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case adorned by huge stone vases each of which was a marvel of art. Men of the Tsar's hunting retinue stood motionless on each second step of the staircase, some dressed in dark green costumes embroidered with gold, in Russian fur caps and with hunting knives in their belts, others with brass bugles slung over their shoulders. Young jockeys stood in some places in pairs, dressed in black velvet caps, short red coats bordered with gold, elk-skin breeches and patent leather riding boots with yellow bands on the top. All these picked men represented different types of Russian manly beauty. Foreign ambassadors and military attaches halted before some of them, admiring their handsome picturesque features.

Military parade uniforms dominated in the crowd ascending the stairs. Sometimes was seen the black evening dress of diplomats, the red coats of senators and the gold-embroidered tunics of statesmen. Here and there appeared merrily chatting ladies like delicate flowers on a field of metal.

The groups of new arrivals parted in the round hall near a huge malachite vase. Some turned to the immense Nicolaievsky hall where a platform decorated with flowers and laurel trees had been erected for the musicians and where a guard of tall Chevalier Guards, clad in picturesque parade uniforms with brass helmets surmounted by silver double-headed eagles stood before the Emperor's portrait. Others went towards the wonderful Pompey gallery, at the entrance of which stood as motionless as statues two great bearded Guard Cossacks clad in red uniforms and black Persian lamb caps.

The entire hall was full of guests, numbering about five thousand. The officers moved about and formed groups according to their units. The foreign ambassadors and their wives stood near the great doors leading to the Emperor's inner apartments. The stout Turkish ambassador in a red fez,\* the oldest neighbour, friend and enemy of the Moscow Tsar, formed the centre of the group. The white and black of evening dress was mingled here with the elegant toilettes of the ladies; here stood

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\* Husni-Pasha.

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the Chinese representatives and next to them a fragile little Japanese lady in a dress of Paris fashion. All waited for the Tsar to appear.

### III

"I AM glad that you have arrived," Pestretzoff said, pushing his way through the crowd of officers in the Pompey gallery, arm in arm with Colonel Samoiloff. "Something perfectly damnable is going on here. You can't imagine what it is like—I simply don't recognise him."

"What's wrong?" Samoiloff asked smiling.

"Let's go somewhere else. There are too many inquisitive ears around. That's a good spot,—we won't be in anyone's way if no lovers have already taken refuge here."

Pestretzoff led Samoiloff through a glass door into the quiet coolness of the winter garden. A tall officer of the Izmailovsky regiment rose from a bench as they approached, saying to a lady who had been sitting next to him: "Alors a demain."

The pair left the garden.

"Excellent," Pestretzoff remarked. "He'll give her a hot time tomorrow," he said nodding in the direction of the tall officer,—“he's the greatest libertine in the whole Guards and a tremendously impertinent fellow. I can't understand how Countess Paltoff risks going anywhere with him. Well, it doesn't matter. Nothing has changed here, love-making continues to be all important. Now tell me what is happening there."

"Feverish preparations for war were in full swing when I left. The mobilisation had not been declared officially but had been already almost completed in secret. The whole Japanese nation has been so morally worked upon, that they hate us with all the power of their souls. The hands of your Japanese barber simply twitch from a desire to cut your throat as he shaves you, only because you are a Russian."

"I suppose English diplomacy has something to do with it all?"

"Certainly. It serves the interests of everyone. We have

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scared many people by the construction of that railway. 'The Russians want to dominate on the Pacific!' 'Why do you need concession on the Yalu?' Only to think of the stupidity of it all. When I arrived at Port-Arthur, I found that there was practically no fleet there. More than half was at Vladivostok. I made my report, which was met with laughter and jokes. 'Nonsense,' they said, 'you have wrong information.' Think of it, they said that to me, who had spent years and years there. 'There will be no war. The macaques won't dare.' 'What macaques?' 'Your yellow faced beggars.' I saw that it was useless to talk to them and came straight here."

"That is so. But Kouropatkin\* has been there, he must have seen everything. What does he think? Have you seen him?"

"The day before yesterday. I reported to him straight from the station."

"Well?"

"He only smiled. I could see that he understands everything. The Japanese Army had made a terrible impression on him. 'What can I do?' he said. 'They don't want to fight here and that's all.' 'How can that be,' I asked, 'when our diplomats are doing everything in their power to provoke war?' 'That's no business of mine,' he answered, 'Count Lamsdorff may give you an answer to that.' But that gentleman simply laughs at the macaques."

"But isn't our Army really the best in the world?"

"Outwardly, Iakov Petrovitch," said Samoiloff and laid his hand on Pestretzoff's elbow, "yes, outwardly that is so. But inside! Oh! Great God! I have visited my friend Tishin at Port-Arthur. He is in command of a regiment there and I have questioned him. 'Have you got machine guns?' 'No.' 'Field glasses for the officers?' 'No. . . .' And so on. They haven't even got khaki shirts, and joke that their white ones are just as good. 'You wear it a bit longer, so that it gets well soaked in sweat and covered with dust, and it'll be more in-

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\* War Minister at that time.



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visible than a khaki one. . . .’ They joke at anything you say, Iakov Petrovitch, . . . they simply won’t look at things seriously.”

“And the spirit of the troops?”

“Some fear the macaques so that they won’t be able to resist their onslaught, others indulge in the opposite extreme and pooh-pooh everything. Nothing is done,—no sensible manœuvres,—nothing. They just drink and carry on their old routine of life. The whole place swarms with Japanese spies. Japanese workmen are employed in the Port-Arthur harbour. Half of them are spies.”

“Have you made your report to Him?”

“Yesterday I was granted an audience. He received me in a charming way. He listened to my report very attentively and put several questions which displayed, a full, how shall I say, lack of information—he knows everything but only from the point of view most pleasing to him. He does not listen to me nor to Kuropatkin nor to other specialists because the youngsters surrounding him have given him an entirely false idea of Japan. One of his A.D.C.’s had spent a week at Nagasaki, another had been present at the manœuvres of a Japanese company, a third had had a Japanese mistress, a fourth had travelled in Corea and everything made him think of Japan as of a weak toy-like country.”

“But is Japan so powerful in reality?”

“One can’t say that Japan is powerful, but we can’t fight Japan. We must do everything in our power to avoid war.”

“As far as I know, we don’t want it ourselves.”

“Well, then we oughtn’t to lose a single minute, but remove everything from Yalu and immediately put an end to these absurd forest concessions there.”

“That is impossible. Do you know who’s capital is invested there?”

“I do. All the more reason for removing it, so that there should be no motives for war, so that the soldiers could not say that they were being driven to fight. You must not forget that

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our internal foes are wide awake and won't lose the opportunity. Our duty is to save the throne."

"Nicolai Zaharovitch, have you really apprehension of danger threatening the throne?"

"Every war, Iakov Petrovitch, unsettles the people and tears away from them the mask of indifference they generally wear. Either a crown of victory, laurels, rewards, and the bloodshed is then forgiven,—or on the contrary you have to exculpate yourself and give an account of your actions. Our people, and not only the simple folk but the *intelligentzia* even, which cannot keep quiet and hope for a constitution, will of course immediately spread the news that Russian blood is being shed for the defense of Imperial capital. You can imagine what everyone will feel about it."

A handsome young officer dressed in the dark green uniform of the Imperial Suite with white shoulder straps bearing the Emperor's initials, white silk belt and patent leather top-boots with ball spurs, passed through the garden and said hurriedly:

"Your Excellency. . . . His Majesty the Emperor."

"I am coming, Sasha," Pestretzoff said, rising.

"He is the husband of the charming young lady to whom I introduced you in the vestibule. An excellent officer in all respects and an example of limitless fidelity to the Emperor, which is now more highly valued than anything else."

Pestretzoff and Samoiloff crossed the gallery, passed under the arch and mixed with the crowd of officers who were waiting for the Emperor to appear.

## IV

IN several places in the hall the Masters of Ceremonies suddenly tapped their thin sticks on the floor, the crowd of guests moved and quieted down in alert silence. The heads of all were turned towards the doors, some rose on tip-toe and tried to see something over those in front. The flowing mighty sounds of the polonaise from Glinka's opera "Life for the Tsar" were heard.

A Master of Ceremonies in a black evening coat, holding in his hands a slender ivory stick bearing the Imperial initials and

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tied by a blue ribbon, quickly walked through the crowd, requesting them to give way and forming a corridor among the guests.

The Emperor walked with the Dowager Empress, his mother, on his arm, and was clad in the uniform of the Preobrajensky regiment. This circumstance filled with happiness the hearts of the officers of that regiment. Count Paltoff, a tall man of athletic build, was the first to notice it. He saw the Emperor over the heads of the crowd and immediately said to the Commander of the regiment:

"Your Excellency, His Majesty the Emperor is in our uniform. . . ."

"In our uniform . . . in our uniform," the other Preobrajensky officers began to repeat, and their faces reflected as great a pleasure as if they had received a birthday present.

The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna followed with the stout Turkish ambassador. She returned graciously the deep bows of the men and the court curtsies of the ladies. But she seemed uncomfortable under the curious looks with which the ladies were scanning her, especially those who were novices at court.

Grand Dukes and ambassadors followed in pairs with Grand Duchesses, Princesses and wives of ambassadors.

The procession sparkled with the diamonds of the ladies and with the gold and silver of the uniforms. It passed round the hall and returned to the great doors, where it formed a separate group. The Empress sat down on a chair, the Emperor at her side.

A smart handsome captain of Her Majesty's Lancers, Masloff, glided up to the Empress and begged her permission to begin the dancing. She silently nodded her consent. The orchestra played a waltz and Masloff offered his arm to the Empress.

Only a few couples danced, and in the part of the hall nearest to the Emperor. Vera Constantinovna, glowing with beauty, danced with a handsome hussar Koltzoff; another hussar, Captain Lambin, waltzed with a young girl, Verotchka Betristsheff; the young Countess Paltoff had the same Izmailovsky officer as

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partner and her husband danced with the Emperor's sister, the Princess Olga Alexandrovna. As soon as the waltz ended and the polonaise began, the majority of the officers present crowded towards the Pompey gallery and the Malachite hall where refreshments and sweets were served according to a custom introduced by Peter the Great at his assemblies and improved by the Empress Catherine. Long rows of tables stood along the walls, covered by silver candlesticks and "surtouts de table." Each was a creation of art, each spoke of the past. Goblets with the eagles of Peter the Great, whole hunting scenes with groups of men, trees, stags, boars and hounds supported crystal dishes and china trays piled with fruits, cakes and sweets. Tea-cups and crystal glasses for lemonades and syrups were placed round them. Bottles of champagne of the Court vintage "Abrao-Durceau" stood here and there in pails of ice surrounded by crystal glasses.

The sweets of the Peterhof Court Confectionery had nothing unusual about them and were of a lower quality than those of many of the Petersburg Confectioneries, but every officer tried to take some for his wife and children. However, most of the officers crowded round the champagne. Gritzenko, dressed in his white parade uniform, stood near a table and was drinking his fifth glass in slow gulps, his long black moustache dipping each time in the golden liquid.

"How nice it is to be the Tsar's guest," he said, winking to Sablin who had just joined him.

The smart hussar Lambin was standing near them and sipping tea.

"It's a good custom, Sasha. An old Russian custom. 'Russia's pleasure is drinking,' said the first Christian sovereign of Russia. The lessons of history appear before me as I stand here. The court of Vladimir the Bright Sun, huge cans filled with Greek wines and the legendary knight Ilia gulping them down all at once. Eh! Our ancestors lived merrily in olden days, not as their descendants do. Ah, Lambin! Am I right?"

"Recollections come to me of Peter the Great and of his goblet of the great eagle," Gritzenko continued. "The kind Em-

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press Catherine and the picturesque crowd that surrounded her lived in these very walls. Asia and Europe, the East and the West gathered 'round these tables and drank perhaps out of these very goblets."

"It is good to eat and to drink," Sablin remarked, "but there is one thing that I cannot understand. Look at that officer with silver shoulder straps who has taken a huge pear and cannot succeed in introducing it into his pocket. His cap is full of sweets. See, he is taking some more. The servants are looking on and are probably laughing at him in their hearts. What is it? Simple greediness?"

"No, Alexander Nicolaievitch," Lambin said, seriously looking at Sablin,—“it isn't greediness. Approach a man with love and not with blame and you will see something different then. This officer probably has a wife and children, who idolise the Emperor as all of us do. It will be the Tsar's sweets, the Tsar's pear for them. They will divide it and eat a little piece each. The sweets they will keep as a souvenir, or eat them as sweets coming from a fairy land. They will serve to illustrate his account of the ball, to which they have not been invited."

"I agree with the Captain, Sasha," said Gritzenko. "Tell this episode to the Empress when you are on duty and I am certain that she will be touched."

A footman brought silver jugs with tea and hot water. Lambin glanced at him and smiled.

"Ah, Vinogradoff!" he said, "How are you getting on?"

"By your favours, Sir, I shall never forget them."

"Thank God that you are keeping fit, but Kumoff has grown into disgraceful shape in the Tsar's own service," Lambin nodded in the direction of a stout servant who was pouring tea.

"I don't get enough gymnastics, Sir," the servant answered laughing respectfully.

"They are all my ex-corporals, Alexander Nicolaievitch," Lambin said as he walked away with Sablin. "Fine fellows, and I am glad I managed to get them this good job. That stout beggar took many prizes for horsemanship in his time. And now



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—he pours out tea as a profession. Yes,—‘tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse.’ It has been well said ‘Everything vanishes.’ . . . Only one thing doesn’t. . . .”

“So you know them all?” Sablin asked.

“We have done four years of service together, lived the same kind of lives, thought the same kind of thoughts. Good fellows, fine Russian soldiers! I love them deeply,—war seems to be approaching and no one can foretell what will happen. . . .”

“The war,” said Sablin and added, bending to Lambin’s ear: “I can assure you that there will be no war.”

“Is this your personal opinion?”

“It is the opinion of His Majesty.”

“Ah . . .” said Lambin. The “ah” was so significant that Sablin looked at Lambin with surprise.

“Let’s go and dance,” Lambin said. “The Emperor has invited us here not to talk politics but to dance with his guests. It is a ball, Alexander Nicolaievitch, don’t forget that. . . .”

### V

CAPTAIN MASLOFF rushed round the hall making arrangements for the quadrille. “Messieurs engagez vos dames. Et á vos places s’il vous plait!” he shouted.

A time-table had been drawn up for the Court ball and was being rigidly adhered to. Exactly at midnight supper was to begin. The dancers occupied chairs, but those who did not dance settled in places where it would be easier to rush for supper. The majority of the guests belonged to the latter category. Everyone wanted to get a place in the hall where the Emperor’s table was. Everyone wanted to see the Emperor at his supper. Besides, some specialists affirmed that the food was of a superior quality in that hall.

“La premiere figure! Avancez. . . .” shouted Captain Masloff who was dancing with the Empress.

Lambin was not far from them. He was dancing with the niece of his ex-Commander, Verotchka Betristcheff, who was for the first time at a palace ball as a “city lady.” Their vis-avis were Vera Constantinovna and Gritzenko.

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"They seem fairy-like, these balls, don't they, Vadim Petrovitch," Verotchka said, fanning herself during an interval.

"Yes, it is a good custom," Lambin replied,— "But I would have gone farther. I would have arranged some similar festivities for peasants, workmen and soldiers. The castes are being destroyed and the Tsar ought to realise that he cannot have the nobility alone to support him. You are young, Vera Iliinichna, and I fear that you will have to go through many hardships yet."

"But Russia seems so happy now, Vadim Petrovitch, the future seems to be so promising. The Emperor is full of a desire for peace."

"It's impossible to talk at these balls," Vera Constantinovna said to Gritzenko. "Have you seen Paltova? Her toilette 'gris perles' is very becoming to her. She is the most beautiful military lady of the season.

"After yourself, Vera Constantinovna."

"Quelle betise. Vous croyez? Am I not quite old looking?"

"Vera Constantinovna, I never flatter."

"Oh, I know. You criticise every woman as you would a horse."

"I am an old cavalry officer, and then there is some gypsy blood in my veins."

"When shall we go to hear the tziganes?"

"When you like. Your husband is against it."

"Oh, Alexander! He will never let me go. Don't you find that Paltova is surrounded too much by the Izmailovsky regiment?"

"That is quite understandable, her brother belongs to that regiment."

"Ah, Rotbek! What a darling he is! His wife is also very nice. Why haven't his sisters been invited? They are so nice."

"In those words you have pronounced their death verdict."

"No, really. Rotbek belongs to our regiment. What does it matter that his father is manager of a commercial enterprise? As if only a few outsiders have been invited here. Oh! I would have invited only the "fine noblesse."

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"The concert balls at the Hermitage have been arranged for that purpose."

"Et grand rond! Chaine chinoise. . . ." Masloff was shouting.

The quadrille was ended. The dancers in pairs and the spectators crowded towards the halls where the supper was served.

Pestretzoff and Samoiloff were moving with the crowd.

"You have been speaking about the high level of the discipline in the Russian Army," Samoiloff said. "But I don't notice it here. Where is it? Could anything similar occur at the Court of the Mikado? Officers push you,—a General,—and rush forward in a crowd. See, someone pushed the Princess Olga Alexandrovna as he passed her and hasn't even excused himself. What is it then?"

"Feeding. Gratuitous feeding and drinking," Pestretzoff answered calmly.

"What do you want, after all?"

"I want" said Samoiloff "to see education and not only outward training. I want Guard officers not to push each other as they hurry to take their places at the Tsar's table; I want, that if all should be dying from thirst and someone should find a pint of water, that he would bring it and give it to the Emperor. I want to see sacrifice, whereas now there is nothing but greed before me. Iakov Petrovitch, days of terrible convulsions are approaching. I would need then soldiers who would obey me as implicitly as did the grenadier of Peter the Great at Potsdam, when he ordered him to jump through the window of the palace: 'Through which, Your Majesty?' Are there such soldiers now?"

"I think that there must be."

"And officers? You do not answer. History will soon demand heroic deeds from them. Will they be able to do them? Will they be equal to the occasion?"

## VI

PESTRETZOFF AND SAMOILOFF sat together during the supper in one of the distant halls. They had not tried to push forward

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and had not sought to be nearer to the sun. Voices were humming around them. The band of one of the guard regiments played on the balcony.

They had started on a turkey with chestnut dressing, when the whole hall suddenly rose with a clatter of chairs and turned in one direction.

The Emperor had entered from the hall where the Imperial family was supping. He walked quickly past the tables, scanning the guests with a kind smile on his lips and speaking the Russian form of greeting:

"Please. Eat for your good health. . . ."

The sovereign of the Russian land was passing round among his guests. Somewhere among the officers a cheer was raised and rang from hall to hall accompanied by the majestic tune of the Russian National Anthem.

Sablin was accompanying the Emperor, a feeling of deep love and fidelity written on his face.

Noise and movement were heard in the great hall where the Emperor had been supping. He had risen, and ladies, young girls, officers, generals and statesmen rushed towards his table before he had time to leave the hall. Everyone tried to take some souvenir, mostly flowers. Some picked a spray of hyacinths or lilies of the valley, others seized whole bunches of them and returned triumphantly to their ladies. Sablin brought to his wife a single spray of lily of the valley and said:

"The Empress had held this spray in her hands, Vera. Put it before the ikon near the bed of our little Tania."

"Oh! Thank you," Vera Constantinovna said, taking the flowers and raising them to her lips. "I shall keep it pressed in my Testament."

The attack on the table continued. Fruit and sweets were being taken in handfuls under the pretext that they came from the Tsar's table. The swarm of guests was turning towards the vestibule. The ball was ended.

"Is that what you think?" an Army artillery Colonel with a black beard said to his companion, a young Lieutenant,—“you

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think that it is the Tsar's luxury, the Tsar's palace, the Tsar's music, the Tsar's entertainment?"

"Well, yes, certainly. . . ." answered the young lieutenant,—  
"whose else could it be?"

"Throw your pears away, Kolia, and don't take them to your mother. Everything that you have met with here belongs to the people. It has all been arranged at the expense of the people, on their money, their blood and their sweat. And we form part of the people. You, myself, all of us, are the people, and accordingly all of it is ours. We have been our own guests and have eaten and drunk our own food and wines. He has only been our manager. And did you notice that the salmon was not fresh at our table and that the sauce-provençale was somewhat sour? Yes . . . and the pheasants were too high. They were decorated with their tails and wings, it is true, but still they smelt. I am certain that someone has stuffed his pockets with money as he prepared this ball. Some German probably."

"Are you going on foot, Ivanitzky?"

"Per pedes apostolorum, as usual. The weather is fine and I shan't go to the lectures at the Academy tomorrow. Yes, my dear friend, God and the Tsar have been created for simple folks. But we educated people ought to realise that the Tsar is only the sign board of an enterprise. It is getting dilapidated, this sign board, my dear friend. You have drunk champagne as much as you wished and praise the Tsar, but I tell you that both the sign board and Tsar are bad. The champagne was not good and I assert that the salmon was not fresh. All these Frederikses and Meyendorffs only make fools of us Russians."

The Colonel staggered slightly, glanced sideways at a sentry in a high brass cap who stood at attention and began to recite the verses:

"'The gleam of the helmets riddled by shot.' . . . Is your helmet riddled by bullets, friend?" He addressed the sentry as he halted before him.

"Come, Misha," his companion said, pulling him by the sleeve,—  
"don't you realise that he's a sentry?"



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"I do, and very much even. A sacred person. He cannot talk when standing at his post. But, my dear, this is laid down in German regulations and we ought to converse heartily, in Russian fashion. It's difficult to keep straight, friend, after the Tsar's champagne. You must be quite frozen here at your post, eh?"

"Come, Misha, stop this. . . ."

"Wait. Go away. You understand nothing. He's of the Pavlovsky regiment and every helmet that they wear has a historic hole bored by a bullet in some battle. The name of the soldier who wore it then is engraved beneath. Is that so?"

"Come, Misha Ivanitzky, I've enough of this."

"He keeps silent. He isn't a Russian then, this rotter. . . ."

The Colonel staggered away and walked down the quay supported by his companion.

## VII

SABLIN's feeling of love for the Emperor had reached its climax after his appointment as personal A.D.C. He no longer lived in the barracks of the regiment but had a luxurious flat on the second floor of a house in the Malaya Morskaya street. Sometimes, while sitting in the evenings before the fire in his study, he would dream of heroic actions he would accomplish so as to save the Emperor. Various scenes arose in his imagination. He threw himself upon a murderer wrenching a bomb from his grasp, which burst in his hands; he shielded the Emperor with his breast from a dagger; he led a regiment to the assault of an enemy position.

He loved the Empress with the same depth of feeling and she noticed this because she was surrounded by unfriendly people. Sablin frequently received invitations to the private table of the Emperor when he was on duty at the palace. The Empress questioned him about his family, showed him her little children and became more and more friendly towards him and Vera Constantinovna when she saw that he loved children as much as she did.

"How many children have you?" she once asked Sablin.

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"Two. A boy Kolia—six years old and a girl Tania, five."

"The same age as my Tatiana."

"The name Tatiana was given her in honour of Her Imperial Highness."

"Why have you no more children? Is your wife unwell?" the Empress asked.

"Oh, no. She is so young and likes society pleasures. She loves the Petersburg life."

"Tell your wife," the Empress said seriously,—*"that it is not good. Children are a blessing of God and it is a sin to renounce them."*

Sablin felt confused and did not answer.

"Ah, these new theories," the Empress said,—*"they won't bring any good to Russia."*

Sablin took photographs of the Empress with her children and accompanied the Emperor when he went out riding. The Emperor loved riding and often went as far as Gatchino accompanied by Sablin and two Cossack orderlies. The Emperor loved simple Russian people more than anyone else. He thought that the moujiks, soldiers and men of his hunting retinue that he saw, were religious, good and devoted to him. He had no passion for women. He had fallen in love only once. In his youth he had been present at an evening where he met a modest little girl with long hair. The little girl, who was the Princess Alice of Hesse, shyly remained in a corner of the room and did not say a word to anyone. The Emperor, then Tsarevitch, fell passionately in love with the Princess and spoke about his feelings to his parents. Many efforts were made to distract him but nothing came of the intrigue with a ballet dancer, Maria Labounsky, on which his father had insisted for his health. That with the ballet dancer Kshesinsky had held a more important place in his life. The power loving, shameless, cynical Pole attempted to subjugate the Tsarevitch to her will but did not succeed. After his marriage he entirely devoted himself to family life.

The Empress immediately realised his weakness and her own power. She saw that she had more brains and common sense

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than he had and began to form plans for the good of Russia. She studied Russia's history. She drew parallels between herself and the modest Princess of Zerbst\* who had become a great Empress and had brought fame to Russia and herself. She also was a modest Princess of Hesse who had studied medicine, had obtained a doctor's degree in philosophy and had now become Empress of Russia. She could influence her husband but very soon she saw that he was far from being an autocrat, that a complex net of intrigue was being woven around him and that he became easily subject to many influences other than her own. She was believed to have German sympathies, although she hated Emperor Wilhelm and worshipped Queen Victoria. The whole Court of Alexander III was proud of the creation of the alliance with France and hated Germany.

The old courtiers grouped themselves round the Dowager Empress who had an influence on her son. Alexandra Feodorovna began to strive against it, but unsuccessfully. She soon realised that this strife would not be easy, for the whole Russian nation had loved the Tsar Peacemaker, as Alexander III had been called, and revered the Dowager Empress. She felt worried and miserable owing to the constant hope for a son who never came, and because of all the gossip which rose from this fact. Her husband became irritated each time a daughter was born, disappointment reigned among the people, and the courtiers and Ministers were cold towards her, feeling that she was losing her power.

She became interested in mysticism. The Montenegrin Princesses Anastasia and Militza, who had become Russian Grand Duchesses, involved the Empress in a number of dark superstitions which they had brought from their native mountains. They invited to Russia and presented to the Court a French adventurer, Philippe Nizier, who had been a druggist's apprentice at Lyons. He asserted that he was a saint, that he was capable of accomplishing miracles. Some of his prophecies were rather successful and this increased the belief of the Em-

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\* Catherine II.

press in him. Phillippe began to have an influence on appointments and everyone courted him. During a voyage abroad he suddenly died, but he left a deep impression on the soul of the Empress and obliging people tried to find a successor for him. She was shy by nature and in that unsuccessful strife became more and more so.

She desired to become more intimately acquainted with the troops and to bring them under her influence. But she could not ride. She wanted personally to present her own regiment of Lancers to the Emperor at a parade but could not start her horse on a gallop from the right foot. At last an old horse was found that she could manage but all her pleasure was spoiled by the ugliness of her steed, and she left without having said a single word to the officers. Soon after that incident she heard enthusiastic accounts of the Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna who had cantered up to her Ahtirsky hussar regiment over the ice, had personally directed a smart cavalry manœuvre, had slept at the Officer's Mess in the company of her maid and had left on the evening of the following day, after conquering the hearts of all the officers.

She could not do it. In her dreams she saw herself making beautiful speeches, preaching culture and patriotism to the Russians, who had too little of these qualities in her opinion, but when she appeared before these very Russians, red spots of nervousness covered her face and she did not know what to say. Whole minutes would sometimes pass in silence at the audiences if the people who were being presented to her were unresourceful and she would put some silly question or leave without having said anything at all. She felt angry with herself but could not conquer her shyness. Sometimes she saw things that did not exist, and thought that everyone loved her only kept secret this feeling.

Alexandra Feodorovna felt angry when she saw admiration in the eyes of the person who was being presented to Maria Feodorovna when both Empresses held a general reception, and the Dowager Empress put question after question smiling with majestic graciousness and handing out her little perfumed hand

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to be kissed. She listened to the phrases of greeting and held out her hand in silence, hurting those presented by her haughty inattention.

She was spoken of as unfeeling, cold and despising Russia. In reality she was only unnaturally self-loving and therefore shy. A small group of people surrounded her, whom she loved with all her heart.

Sablin felt deeply touched by the attention and confidence of Alexandra Feodorovna. She spoke to him about children for hours.

"Tell me Sablin," she said once,—“who should I be before all. An Empress or the mother of my children?”

Sablin, thinking of his love for his own family quickly answered:

“A mother.”

The Empress looked at him gratefully.

“Thanks! Oh, thanks. You understood me, others have told me that I am only Russia’s Empress, but those are words of harsh and heartless people.”

## VIII

SABLIN was lunching with the Emperor in the intimate circle of his family. The lunch passed almost in silence but for occasional remarks in English of the Emperor and the Empress and the unceasing childish prattle of the merry little Grand Duchess Tatiana. The lunch ended, the children were led away and the Empress kissed the Emperor on the forehead and left for her apartments. The Emperor rose. He had to be present at a conference at one o’clock but for some reason he lingered. He approached a window and gazed out on the neat Tsarskoie Selo park and at the melancholy sadness of the bare willows and oaks bordering the wide lanes.

“Tell me something amusing,” the Emperor meditatively said to Sablin.

Sablin had a talent for anecdotes out of Jewish and Armenian life, could give a good description of some noble deed of a soldier or a peasant, and the Emperor liked to listen to him.



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But he remained silent now. The Emperor's sad mood infected him and he could not think of anything amusing. All was quiet in the dining room. Servants were noiselessly and quickly clearing the table. The rhythmic tic-toc of a large clock was alone heard, and Sablin watched it with anxiety, afraid that the Emperor would be late for the conference.

"The summer and the golden autumn have passed," the Emperor said in a low voice,—“the winter has come. I love our Russian winter,—the snow, the frost, the drives in sledges and the hunting. All of it is so nice. The snow is so pure and so honest. Isn't it, Sablin? . . . Why can't men be pure and honest? Why are some always hatching plots against others, why are there intrigues all around? Do you know, Sablin, I have never heard anyone say anything good about another person, but always something nasty. Why? What interest do they find in it?”

Sablin answered nothing, not knowing what to say.

"Ministers come to me with their reports. Hatred and not love is in their words. Their own interests and not Russia's. They all try to gratify me when they ought to love Russia. I am an autocrat Sablin, and the day shall come when I will prove it!"

The Emperor looked at Sablin attentively as if expecting to hear protests. But Sablin remained silent. He did not understand the Emperor and listened with anxiety to his words.

"You may think that all of this is dear to me? No, Sablin, I would have given much to be an ordinary, simple man and to have only the land, flowers, a garden and fruit around me. And a quiet sky overhead, and God. No one else. No intrigues and no strife. Why do all these people strive for power? Why do they constantly fight each other and fall turn by turn. Why?"

The Emperor looked round the dining room with sad eyes and turning to the window quietly beat a tattoo on the glass with his fingers.

"Your Imperial Majesty," Sablin said, looking with anxiety at the clock. The Emperor turned quickly and sighed.

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"It is time to go," he said. "Yes, I know. An Emperor hasn't the right to be late. It always makes the people who are waiting for him fear that something has happened. One has to hurry always, to receive someone and speak or answer questions. The freedom of sovereigns?—it does not exist!"

The Emperor walked quickly out of the dining room. Several minutes later he was seated with Sablin in a broad sledge and his features had the usual kind and affable expression. All shadows of sorrow had vanished from it.

### IX

THE opera "Mephistopheles" was given at the Hermitage theatre at the end of January 1904. Everything came off in excellent fashion and Chaliapin sang better than usual. A supper was served afterwards and the Emperor sat at a large round table shaded by palm trees. He appeared to be in a good mood. It seemed that the dark clouds that had arisen in the East were now dispersing. Russia was making concessions. During the entr'acts the eyes of all had been fixed on the Japanese ambassador and military attache. As always they hissed when they spoke, inhaling air through their teeth, and were extremely reserved. They calmly answered the tactless questions of some officers about the probability of war: "It depends on the will of the Mikado and of your Emperor. Our duty is to obey."

After the opera Sablin and Vera Constantinovna drove to a ball given by Countess Paltoff, and returned home only towards dawn. Sablin had just got up at ten in the morning when a message was brought to him from the regiment. The Commander requested all the officers to assemble at the Mess. There was nothing extraordinary in this. "Some election again," thought Sablin,— "or the discussion of Mess matters." The hour alone appeared queer. Eleven was the time for drill.

All the officers were assembled at the Mess when Sablin arrived, but the Commander of the regiment was late. The reason for his summons had been guessed. The morning papers contained the news of an attack on our fleet carried out by the Japanese without declaration of war. Three large battleships

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were either sunk or seriously damaged, sailors had been killed and wounded. The telegram was brief and not clear. One thing was felt—we had been taken unawares. It was insulting and painful.

The officers were wandering around the Mess, waiting for the arrival of their Commander. Matzneff had spread a large map of Japan and Corea on one of the tables of the library and the officers were scanning it. Few knew the whereabouts of Port Arthur. Others were reading the newspapers. The stout Men-shikoff was eating a steak in the dining room as a precaution for emergencies, and Fetisoff, who had just returned from drill, was drinking tea. Gritzenko played in the billiard room, solving problems he put to himself. Rotbek looked on, munching something, and offered advice.

Matzneff was engaged in a discussion in the library.

"There will be no war," he was saying. "It is to no one's interest. The Japs have kicked up a row and will quiet down."

"It's impossible after such an insult to the Russian State," Reprin said,—“we have let it go once, as it is, when our Emperor travelled in Japan as Tsarevitch and a Jap attacked him.”

"It was the case of a mad dog then, but now it means war," said Koreneff.

"War without declaration. It is something unheard of in the civilised world," Samalsky remarked. "Only these yellow savages are capable of such a rash step."

"They shall get a thrashing for it!" Fetisoff said as he entered from the dining room.

"I like it," Rotbek said. "Only to think of it. Tiny Japan displaying such impertinence! Just went for us!"

"What insolence!" Samalsky said,—“I spoke to their military attache at the theatre yesterday. He was perfectly calm and said that the decision lay in the hands of our Emperor and that there would be no war should he not wish it. He must have known that the war had already begun!”

"How could he have known it?" Fetisoff asked.

"He must have known if the newspapers knew."

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"I can state only one thing," Sablin said,—“the Emperor knew nothing. His Majesty was calm and in a good mood.”

“An exotic expedition,” Repnin said condescendingly,—“one cannot call it a war. It will be something like the suppression of the Boxer uprising.”

“I shall have a villa built there on conquered land. I have heard that there are splendid places near Nagasaki,” Rotbek said.

“I think that it shall be a most serious and difficult war,” said Captain Bobrinsky, who had finished the General Staff Academy a year previously. “The Guards may have to go to the front.”

“What!” Steepochka Vorobieff exclaimed nervously. “The Guards cannot be sent to the front. They have quite different and much more important tasks before them. It would be madness to move the Guards from the capital.”

“Why?” Bobrinsky asked.

“Because apart from a foreign foe we always have inner ones. Petersburg cannot be left alone with its universities and multitudes of workmen.”

“The Cossacks can easily disperse the students with their nagaikas,” Fetisoff remarked.

“Don’t forget the workmen, they number over two hundred thousand!”

“They are unarmed!”

“Today they have no arms and tomorrow some friendly power can manage to arm them under the pretext of sending machinery.”

“The police ought to see to that,” said Matzneff. “The Guard cannot be kept here only because of the students and workmen. That would be too much.”

“It isn’t a matter of workmen but of the defense of the Throne and of the dynasty,” Repnin said seriously,—“only the Guards fully realise the immense importance of the Empire for Russia, and only the Guards are quite free from ideas. . . .”

“But in 1824 . . .” put in Matzneff.

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"It was a misunderstanding which arose out of the abdication of the Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch."

"And Elisabeth? And Catherine? Haven't the Preobrajensky and Izmailovsky regiments helped them in their 'coups d'états?'" Matzneff continued.

"That is just why the Guard Cavalry which has always been faithful to the Throne must be kept at St. Petersburg. It isn't the question of a palace 'coup d'état.' That would be impossible and unnecessary now, but of a revolutionary rising of armed multitudes."

"After all it's good that we won't be sent to the front," Matzneff said. "War isn't a nice thing. Blood, wounds, corpses. I dislike them and the distance is too great. Let those fight whom it pleases. I feel no longing to go."

The ringing voice of the orderly officer, Lieutenant Kongrin, was heard in the hall as he made his report to the Commander of the regiment. Petrovsky, ruddy from the frost and looking excited, entered the library. He shook hands with the officers and said:

"Gentlemen, please excuse me for arriving late. I have come straight from the Grand Duke, Commander-in-Chief. Gentlemen! An unexpected, unheard of and shocking event took place last night. The Japanese fleet treacherously crept up to our ships in Port Arthur harbour and blew up some of them. Three large battleships have been put out of action. The ambassador has offered no apologies—they would have been impossible. The Emperor has declared war on Japan."

The Commander of the regiment stopped to recover his breath. The officers were infected by his excitement.

"I am very sorry, gentlemen, that I cannot congratulate you upon going to the front. The Guards remain here. We hope to attain victory without touching our Western frontier."

"Does anything threaten us from there?" Repnin asked and genuine anxiety was heard in his tone.

"As far as I know the Emperor has already received from Emperor Wilhelm assurances that Germany is keeping a neutrality favourable to Russia. Our noble friend and recent guest



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has been true to his word. But the Guards are needed here. The Throne and the capital have to be well guarded in days of war."

"Have you heard who has been appointed Commander-in-Chief?" Prince Repnin asked.

"For the moment Linevitch. But he will probably be replaced by Kuropatkin who desires this appointment. There is some possibility that our August Commander-in-Chief will go there personally."

"Your Excellency," Fetisoff said rising. He had suddenly grown pale and looked straight into the eyes of the Commander of the regiment. "Will the officers who express the desire to leave for the front be allowed to go?"

"I don't know. . . . Why not? I will ask the Grand Duke. Gentlemen, I have not finished yet. His Majesty desires to personally inform his Guards about events. The Emperor desires to unite with his officers in a general prayer before the Almighty in these hard moments sent to him by God. We must put on our parade uniforms and immediately leave for the palace."

The Commander of the regiment made a movement to leave. Lieutenant Fetisoff and four young Lieutenants approached him.

"Your Excellency," Fetisoff said,—“Myself and the Lieutenants Oksenshirna, Malsky, Turoff and Popoff beg you to obtain for us a permission to leave for the front as volunteers, even as privates.”

"All right," Petrovsky said with displeasure,—“Prince, note their names.”

"Write mine down also," Sablin said firmly, coming forward.

## X

THE air was close in the little palace hall adjoining the church, which was now full of officers. Voices hummed all around. The attack of the Japanese fleet and the coming war formed the only topic of conversation. War was discussed everywhere. Most thought of it as a merry expedition of some other troops

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to distant lands and of new victories, new conquests and new glory. It could not be otherwise. Not much time had elapsed since Russia had obtained the beautiful Batoum district and had conquered the Caucasus, Turkestan, Poland, Bessarabia and the Crimea. All had been obtained by the power of Russian arms and the gigantic structure of the great Russian Empire had been built up brick after brick by the blood of Russian soldiers and officers. Japan would also be conquered. Almost everyone had heard of Japan as a charming little country, a pretty toy full of nice little women. The words: "The Tokio province,"—"The Gokohama and Nagasaki districts" were already on people's lips. The Guard officers were certain that the Guards would not be sent so far from the capital. They were onlookers and saw only victory and glory in the war. The mood of the Army officers was slightly different. Battalions had already been sent from their regiments to the Far East, still more might be taken, and this made them anxious. Questions which nearly everyone had tried to forget now arose in their full importance.

What would they do with their families, if they should be sent? Where should they leave them? What would happen to their children if they should be killed? War was quite different from what it had appeared at a distance.

The sticks of the Masters of Ceremony tapped nervously on the floor. The door leading to the church was opened and closed immediately and a fragment of a religious hymn sung by the choir floated into the hall.

The order was heard: "Gentlemen, officers! Attention!" Everyone was silent.

The Emperor entered the throng of officers. Sablin could see him, could hear his low voice, but did not understand a word of what he said. He was too excited by his own sudden decision to leave for the front. The Emperor spoke quietly and briefly. Someone raised a cheer as soon as he finished and a mighty hurrah suddenly rolled through the hall and followed the officers as they descended the stairs. All were certain of victory.

Sablin left the palace, and drove home.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The winter sun was shining brightly, the clean white snow sparkled under its rays. Newspaper boys were running along the pavements and shouted merrily:

"A great victory for Japan! An attack on Port Arthur! A great victory for Japan!"

"What does this mean?" thought Sablin. "How dare they shout so. . . . A victory for Japan. No one stops them. An officer approaches them and buys a newspaper. A policeman looks on and displays complete indifference to what this stupid boy is shouting. What is it? Lack of patriotism and of understanding of the importance of the moment?"

". . . A great victory for Japan! Three battleships have perished! . . . Where am I? At Tokio or at St. Petersburg? Why don't I stop him myself and box his ears for these absurd shouts? It does not seem to hurt anyone's feelings. A young girl passes him, a student. . . . Are we Russians if we don't feel this?"

The izvostchik let his horse run at a full trot when they entered the Malaja Morskay street and turning his face which was ruddy from the frost and fringed by a small curly beard he said:

"Is it true sir, that the Emperor has declared war on the Japanese?"

"Yes. Haven't you heard that they attacked us and almost succeeded in sinking three of our large battleships?"

"I have heard. Everyone is talking about it. But can it mean war?" We ought to have acted differently . . ."

"What do you mean?" Sablin asked with surprise.

"So. . . . With good feeling. So that there would be no war."

"It is impossible."

"It may be so, but still it's necessary. The Tsar can do anything. He's like God."

The izvostchik kept silent for some time and then turned round again.

"Then there'll be mobilization?"

"Yes, certainly," Sablin answered.

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"So. . . . That's just what I say. We don't need war. Think of it only. I have a wife and three children. A month ago I bought my own horse and my own sledge and am now my own master. And here comes the mobilization. E—eh! We don't need it. We don't. It would have been better to end it all peacefully!"

Sablin paid the *izvostchik* and looked with disgust at his ruddy good looking face.

"He is a Russian!" Sablin thought as he ascended the staircase,—“the Japanese have attacked us, have delivered a smack on the cheek of the Russian nation and he thinks nothing of it. They are ready to present the other cheek. Their personal petty interests dominate all. The beauty of great deeds, glory, honour,—all is a mere sound for them. All that he thinks about is—wife, three children and to be his own master. It is horrible! Total lack of patriotism!"

## XI

THE six-year-old Kolia dressed in a blue sailor shirt and short knickers and the fair-haired five-year-old Tania heard the bell and, knowing that it was their father, ran to meet him, not listening to the words of their German nurse.

"Father has come, father has come!" shouted Kolia dancing round him and pulling at the cold scabbard of his sword,—“I met him first!"

"No, I have," Tania interrupted him.

"Go, children, you will catch cold, I have come in from the frost."

"No, father, I want to go with you," prattled Kolia, following him.

"Take them, *Fraulein*," Sablin said. "Is Vera Constantinovna at home?"

"She is in her drawing room," answered the nurse.

"Tell her, please, that I would like to speak to her."

Sablin went to his study, took off his parade tunic and flung it over the back of a chair. Vera Constantinovna entered and they kissed.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Alexander," Vera Constantinovna said quietly,—“can it be true? Has war been declared?”

“Yes, the Emperor has only just spoken about it to us. There was no other issue after this insult to Russia!”

“Our regiment of course stays here,” Vera Constantinovna said.

“Yes, it will, but a permission has been granted to the officers to join for the time of war other units which are leaving for the front. I am going to leave also.”

“What?” Vera Constantinovna said frowning. “You will do that?”

“Why no?” Sablin said quickly and stopped before a window with his back turned to the light. Vera Constantinovna was standing before an arm chair. She was dressed in a loose light blue morning gown trimmed with expensive lace. Her hair was not done and fell in capricious waves over her forehead. Sablin had to acknowledge that she was very beautiful and that he loved her more and more as time went on.

“Who is leaving from the regiment?” Vera Constantinovna asked quietly, hardly moving her lips.

“Fetisoff, Oksenshirna, Malsky, Popoff and Turoff,” Sablin answered.

“I can understand Fetisoff. A wild sort of fellow, an adventurer. Oksenshirna is a nasty boy whom soon no one will receive in decent houses and who will be dismissed from the regiment because of his scandals. The parents of Malsky and Popoff will never allow them to go. Turoff can go—no one needs this ugly fellow. But you? Did you realise what you were doing when you volunteered?”

“Vera, I had thought. . . . I know only one thing. My duty as an officer is to go to the front in war time. I cannot look at it otherwise. I would feel ashamed to parade the streets in officer’s uniform while war is going on.”

“I am against it,” Vera Constantinovna said proudly, her nostrils twitching. She raised her head and fixed her blue eyes on Sablin. He lowered his.

“You are a descendant of the knights of Livonia, Vera. You



cannot say such things. You ought to persuade me to go should I have wavered. Your duty is to tell me: 'With your shield or on it.' "

"I know where my duty lies," Vera Constantinovna replied,—"but you do not realise yours. Is your regiment leaving? Your squadron, the men whom you have taught? Why don't you answer?"

"No, they are not going."

"Your duty is to stay with them. You can never know what is coming. What will happen if the Guards should be needed for the defense of the Throne, while all the officers have departed in quest of cheap laurels of victories over the Japanese? Would it be good?"

Sablin remained silent.

"I say nothing about your duty towards myself. You can't leave me like this. I am young and I love you so. I can't live without you. Have pity on me."

She stretched her arms towards him. The broad lace sleeves of her morning gown slipped down to the elbow and the bare beautiful arms with fingers sparkling with gems were stretched out towards him. Sablin was struggling with himself. He stood at the window, his head bent low. Blood flowed towards his brain and hindered his thoughts. The excitement he had experienced at the Palace from the words of the Emperor, from the general enthusiasm and the ringing cheers of the officers was disappearing and being replaced by a different one.

"Just as you like," Vera Constantinovna said sadly and her beautiful arms fell limply,—“just as you like. You are the lord and I am your slave. I wouldn't have said a word if it was our regiment that was going. It would have been your duty then. But your duty is the defense of the Throne and of Russia. A war of conquest, an expedition to Japan is for adventurers for whom personal glory has more importance than a severe adherence to a difficult duty. Have you thought of the Emperor? He has showered favours on you. He has made you his personal A.D.C. and you are leaving him in hard moments of war and perhaps of revolution.”

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

She stood sorrowful and her blue eyes were still fixed on him. Her dark eyebrows were frowning, the thin lips were firmly pressed together.

"Well, all right! Go then . . ." she said suddenly in a sobbing voice and tears shone like diamonds in her eyes and ran down her cheeks. She sank powerless into the large leather arm chair. He was at her feet in a second, clasped her knees, kissed her little hands, kissed her cheeks covered with tears and sought her lips. But she avoided his, hid her face on his breast, pushed away and then clasped him to her.

Passion was seizing them. . . . .

. . . . .

Vera Constantinovna left the study happy with her victory. Sablin remained alone. He sat on the sofa, his hands supporting his head and curling his long hair round his fingers. He was thinking. Was there any difference between himself and the *izvostchik* who had driven him home from the palace? There the motives were a horse, a sledge, wife, children and the newly experienced happiness of ownership, and here—the comfort of a luxurious flat, the love of a beautiful young woman and the wide happiness of a life without worries such as he had led during the past years. Which of them could be then called the patriot? Where was the mighty unselfish love for Russia for which no sacrifice would be too great? But the words of Vera Constantinovna kept ringing in his ears. The *izvostchik* would have to go if he should be mobilized, but perhaps he would not be called upon and would then keep his family and his horse. What was he then thinking about? He had not been called upon. His duty lay in remaining at his difficult post and not in leaving for a merry expedition full of adventures.

## XII

SABLIN had not withdrawn his request to the Commander of the regiment. He could not do that and Vera Constantinovna did not insist upon it. She pleaded her cause before the Empress. The Empress took the matter into her hands and Sablin's application for a transfer to the Far East was declined by order

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from above. Only Fetisoff, Oksenshirna and Turoff left from the regiment. Malsky and Popoff withdrew their requests.

All Sablin's thoughts were at the front. He read all the news that arrived from the Far East, tried to meet people who returned from there, questioned them; and the more he thought about the war the less he understood the Russian people in general and the educated classes especially.

The war was going on while Russia lived its usual life and showed no interest in the events. After Turentchen it had become evident that it was not a merry expedition to the country of the geishas but a difficult, serious war that lay before Russia, —a war which would influence the whole development of the life of the nation. But the society circles were still ironical about the war.

A pompous farewell supper with music and speeches was arranged for Fetisoff, Oksenshirna and Turoff, but no one praised their noble impulse. On the contrary all seemed to blame them for leaving the regiment. The supper was extremely merry, and many jokes were made.

"Bring me back a pair of geishas," Rotbek, who had consumed a considerable amount of champagne, said as he kissed Fetisoff.

"I can't, you are married."

"It doesn't matter. They shall only dance, sing and nothing more."

"You'll get a hot time from your wife for it."

"I'm not afraid."

Only when Matzneff said, looking in Fetisoff's direction: "I have a feeling that he won't return," all were silent around him and the terrible thought came to them through the mist of wine vapours: "one can be killed and wounded where these men are now going."

The Russian educated classes were not worried by the defeats of the Army, felt no sorrow because of them and did not institute national mourning after the loss of the "Petropavlovsk" and the death of Makaroff and Verestchagin. After a moment

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of grief and thoughtfulness all resumed their ironical attitude towards themselves.

No one sought for the real reasons of defeat, which lay deep in their own souls, but only joked and laughed. Humouristic poems were circulated among the public.

The government tried to interest the lower classes by issuing grotesque pictures of naval actions, a cavalry attack at Vafangoo and portraits of Kuropatkin, Stessel and Linevitch. Correspondents sent back long accounts to their newspapers but even the most favourably inclined often let the hard truth appear between the lines.

The enemies of the government raised their heads and the people who hoped to overthrow the existing order of things began to work.

Sablin soon felt that some cord had snapped and that a deep precipice now separated the people from the Tsar. Perhaps it had existed before, but it had been concealed. There was no hostility as yet. Only entire indifference. Once Sablin drove back from the summer manœuvres to the "White House" using post-horses. He talked to the driver, a calm, sensible looking man of about thirty. The conversation kept turning to the war.

"Do the Japanese continue to beat us, sir?" asked the driver.

"They don't. Great battles are raging and we have had to retire slightly. But we shall throw them back as soon as we get reinforcements."

"My brother has written to me from there. It's necessary to finish this war and to surrender. We can't beat them."

"How can we surrender. We shall then have the Mikado instead of the Emperor!" exclaimed Sablin.

"It's all the same to us, sir, Nicolas or the Mikado. We shall have to pay the same taxes and the Mikado may lessen them perhaps. . . . More land, that's what we need. It would have to be divided equally."

The driver was a simple good natured fellow and no traces of revolutionism were to be noticed in him. His words made Sablin think deeply. He had heard much about the ignorance and lack of education of the Russian people. When working

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with recruits Sablin had often met with their primæval ideas on life, but like most men of his class he saw Russia's power in this ignorance and lack of culture of the Russian peasant. He thought that this would enable the peasants to have a pure faith in God, to revere the Tsar and to obey the authorities. Sablin thought that an ignorant crowd was easier to deal with, that it was more obedient. The war opened the eyes of the people. It raised the curtain which hid the darkness that reigned in their souls and Sablin saw with horror that no traces of patriotism, of faith in God or of love for the Tsar were to be found there. Only a greedy desire to possess land and to have their own horses, cattle and other appliances. He thought of the *izvostchik* on the day of the declaration of war—"I am my own master," and of the newspaper boys. The latter still continued to shout painful news from the front in the same tone but no one stopped them.

The necessity to teach and educate the people, to create schools of patriotism became evident to Sablin. But who would do the teaching? Those who had finished high schools and universities? He thought of the young educated people he had met in the days of his youth at the house of the Martoffs. This class of people itself needed to be taught patriotism. They did not believe in Russia and they did not love it. . . . They had started writing pamphlets directed against the Army; they laughed and mocked at our failures.

The Tsar, the people and the educated classes were opposed to one another and none of them understood the rest. The Tsar loved Russia and believed in the people. He thought he could judge of them by his Body-Guard and by his servants. The Tsar had often told him: "Our people are the best in the world." The Tsar did not know that in the meantime the real people said calmly: "It's all the same to us, Nicholas or the Mikado. . . . We want land!"

The people had their own Tsar. The terrible Tsar, Hunger, and the Land which saved them from it and which was their Tsaritsa.

The educated people were between the people and the Tsar.



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They did not love or recognise the Tsar, and all tried to undermine his power and authority, some consciously, others unconsciously. There was a wide gulf between the life of the educated classes and that of the people. They did not know or understand them. They idealised the peasants, endowing them with qualities which they lacked. Something was going wrong in the great Russian building, cement and separate bricks were falling out of it. It was then that someone made a new epigram full of anxiety about Russia: "Russia is a giant with feet of clay. The feet are being washed away and the giant may collapse at any moment." Prince Shahovskoi, a serious officer and a distant relative of Count Leo Tolstoi, had said this to Sablin.

Sablin had been happy before the war. He had loved the Tsar, Russia and the Russian people and felt quite at home in the circle of his family.

Now he began to lose his faith in the people. He often visited the squadron and talked to the men and the sergeant.

The old Ivan Karpovitch was brimming with wrath and indignation.

"The men are becoming quite different from what they were, Your Honour. They're going crazy. I tell a man to polish his brass buttons and he begins to speak of the Japanese war. 'Nothing shining is needed there,' he says, 'all is invisible.' They're getting too educated and talk too much."

But the soldiers avoided talking to Sablin. They feared him and Sablin noticed by some of their questions that new thoughts were rising in their minds and that they tried to conceal them.

"Your Honour," the smart corporal Pankratoff asked, "how could it happen that we had no maps ready for the Far East? One cannot fight without maps nowadays."

"Your Honour, people are saying that cavalry is no longer needed now. The Japanese have none, but they get on quite well without it. The horses are quite expensive. If only one could distribute them among the farms . . ." said the private Baum, the son of wealthy colonists.

Questions that had not existed before now rose in the minds of the soldiers. Previously they had implicitly obeyed all the

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orders of the officers without thinking over or discussing them. The soldiers had trusted the officers.

Now the soldiers took interest in the newspapers and read much; some questioned and talked to the officers. This moment should have been used to support and to unite with them in the same thoughts, but the officers could not do that. Neither could Sablin. The whole of their lives prevented them from doing so. Sablin involuntarily remembered Lubovin and Marousia. Yes, his ancestors rose between them. The soldiers sought equality and friendly intercourse, Sablin desired the same but nothing came out of his conversations with the men. They involuntarily took the form of lessons. The soldiers had to get up, stand at attention when talking and call him "Your Honour." Their relations still had the form of those of a noble and of servants.

It was difficult to speak to them. Reports came from the war of the importance of invisible colour for clothing, of trenches, of scouting and of the impossibility of cavalry attacks. The same white shirts and cavalry drill in close order reigned on the manœuvre field meanwhile. War was teaching the necessity of new methods but the old routine continued to prevail. The men were losing all interest in the manœuvres. Sablin went to see Dalgren, a cavalry expert.

Dalgren had a reputation for reserve but he now condemned Kuropatkin and blamed him for lack of audacity. The spirit of criticism had penetrated even into the General Staff. Everyone criticised much but little was done to straighten things out.

"Thus the war has given a tremendous blow to the Russian Empire," thought Sablin. "The Tsar, the educated classes and the people have become separated from each other. The people do not believe in the Tsar and the intellectual classes hate him and desire to overthrow him. The educated classes and not the people are the Tsar's enemies and the fight must be with them. Now or never the Tsar must do something that will separate him from the all-criticising intellectuals and bring him nearer to the people."

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

### XIII

IN the last days of September Sablin received an order from the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna to accompany a transport of presents from her to an Army Corps near Mukden. The presents had been carefully prepared and packed, many of them personally by the Empress. They consisted of a large handkerchief in which were enveloped a set of underwear, tobacco, tea, a pound of sugar, sweets, writing paper, envelopes and a large photograph of the Empress with the newly born Tsarevitch in her arms.

Sablin arrived at Mukden on a quiet autumn day. Four Guard soldiers accompanied the truck with the presents. Sablin found a transport unit near the station and, having left two of his soldiers to supervise the unloading, rode through Mukden towards the Headquarters of the Corps. One of his corporals and a transport soldier accompanied him, mounted on little Manchurian horses.

Mukden was teeming with life. Russian soldiers in grey, blue and green shirts crowded the streets. No one saluted and there was none of the outward discipline to which Sablin had been accustomed at Petersburg. No freedom or comradeship, such as the war might have created, could be noticed in their behaviour. They seemed indifferent to everything. Officers covered with dust and almost as untidy as the soldiers, except for their silver or gold shoulder straps, surrounded hawkers, purchased various trifles or simply wandered aimlessly through the streets. Chinese in blue dresses were seen here and there, heavy Chinese wagons with two huge wheels and a great blue cover were slowly driven through the crowd by pairs of mules, horses, donkeys or even cows. The wagons were laden with various domestic possessions on which sat brightly painted Chinese women with narrow eyes. Mounted Chinese, accompanied by untidy looking Russian soldiers, returned from scouting for provisions.

Long boards with golden Chinese letters over the shops surrounded by multi-coloured rags, red poles with gilded balls on

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the top, typical Chinese houses, the roofs of which had upturned edges, temples with stone "shidzi,"—something between a dog and a dragon—, terrible looking pictures of gods painted over the gates, the long black plaits of the men, the round caps with round balls on the top of those of the officials, the barbers shaving half naked workmen in the streets and cooks roasting Chinese dishes on grates in the open air. Russian soldiers, officers and army wagons laden with aromatic Russian rye bread, moved among these Chinese surroundings. The contrast diverted and interested Sablin. He soon noticed that the appearance of both officers and men was quite different in various units. He could see neatly dressed infantry soldiers with the Emperor's initials on their crimson shoulder straps. These saluted well and were smart looking. He could see men of Petersburg units clad in yellow shirts with numbers on their shoulder straps that had become familiar to him from the manoeuvres. These also seemed good. But others had lost all soldierly appearance, were clad in semi-Chinese rags and were impertinent and disgusting. Sablin noticed that the men with the Emperor's initials on their shoulder straps were smarter than the rest. The Emperor's name seemed to put an obligation on them. Sablin began to talk with his orderly, the transport soldier, so as to verify his own impressions, and asked to what unit belonged the soldier who had so smartly saluted him.

"Of His Majesty's First East Siberian regiment, smart fellows all of them," answered the soldier.

"How do they fight?" asked Sablin.

"The best regiment we have out here," said the Siberian soldier,—*"the Japs run before them."*

"Why aren't all like this regiment?"

"Why?"—the soldier had evidently never thought of it,—*"I don't know why. It is true that they are different. There are regiments which it is useless to send into action, they run at the first shot. But these fight one against ten and sing songs in the meantime. I don't know why that's so."*

They rode out of the town passing through gates cut in a

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great battlemented wall. The road passed through fields of reaped gaolian or Manchurian millet of gigantic size.

They met heavy carts laden with sheafs of gaolian, sacks of grain and cages with chickens. The rich country partly continued its autumn work. The dim outlines of violet hills were hardly noticeable ahead or to the left. Warm air flowed before them quivering with the heat.

Sablin rode past the houses of Chinese landowners. Pear trees stretched over stone walls, their branches laden with golden fruit. Brick paved paths, geraniums covered with their bright autumn blossoms and grey houses with paper windows could be seen through the gates.

Peaceful existence and the quiet of a warm autumn reigned around. Little reminded one of the war.

### XIV

THE Commander of the Corps, a tall handsome old man, an ex-guardsman and A.D.C. of the Emperor Alexander II received Sablin kindly. He lodged in one half of a Chinese house, the other being occupied by his staff. The latter, being Guard officers and Sablin's Petersburg acquaintances, met him with noisy exuberance and began questioning him about Petersburg and the thoughts of people there.

"I am fed up with this war," said an aide, Captain Koushkovsky. "You can't imagine to what extent I'm fed up with it. We can't beat the Japs. They're much more cunning than we are."

"How do our men fight?"

"I can't understand them. Sometimes they accomplish marvels of bravery and at others fly in panic. Somehow everything is stupid and aimless. There is no certainty about anything. Tomorrow will begin the advance upon Liao-Yang, but, frankly speaking, I'm convinced we won't take it."

"Why has the advance been ordered then?" asked Sablin.

"Public opinion insists upon it," said Bobchinsky, another aide of the Corps Commander.

The latter was examining the presents.



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"How good it is," he said,—“that Her Majesty has sent her portrait. It will encourage the soldiers before the battle. It will be easier now to die for her.”

The Commander of the Corps decided to drive after dinner to the nearest division and there personally distribute the presents. The order to assemble the regiments was telephoned to the division and at five o'clock Sablin settled with the General in a comfortable carriage drawn by a pair of good horses and drove towards the bivouac. His heart was beating. He would soon see men who knew already what life and death meant, before him would be men many of whom would die on the morrow. “What are they like?” he thought. “Have they risen in spirit as they wait for brave deeds and for death or are they still full of petty interests of everyday life?”

Long rows of low tents appeared on a wide yellow trampled field. It was the bivouac of the division. The battalions were lined up in dark grey quadrangles. The instruments of a band which had not been cleaned for a long time, shone dully on the right flank of the nearest regiment.

The regiments presented arms and the band played a march.

The Commander of the Corps approached the first regiment, greeted the men and commanded. “Order arms!”

Sablin stood behind the Commander of the Corps. Motionless lines of soldiers were before him. Grey caps, great-coats tied up in rolls and slung over the shoulders, grey trousers, top-boots,—Sablin was accustomed to it all and it reminded him of manœuvres and not of war. The men had a sullen appearance. Their eyes expressed nothing.

In spite of his age the voice of the Commander of the Corps had the tones of a man accustomed to speak before the ranks. He said that Her Majesty had not forgotten the Army among her many Imperial duties, that she had thought of the soldiers and had sent for each man her portrait and a gift.

“Keep in your hearts this favour of the Empress,” said the General,—“remember our mother the Tsaritsa and die boldly for her and for Russia!”

Tears appeared in the General's eyes. He was deeply moved

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by his own words. The soldiers answered the usual phrase: "We shall do our best, Your Excellency," and remained silent again.

The order was given to stack arms and the issue of the presents was begun by companies.

Sablin asked for permission to stay at the bivouac, and walked among the tents. He was a stranger here. He talked to the officers; and aged Colonels addressed him, a Captain, in respectful tones. The soldiers only gaped at his uniform and the sparkling initials on the shoulder straps and smiled stupidly. Sablin had tea with the Commander of a regiment and left the bivouac saying that he would return on foot to the Headquarters of the Corps.

The bright Manchurian sun was quietly sinking in a golden mist. A great red moon rose slowly above the dark hills as if it were bound by a huge lever to the sun. All the beautiful colours of the Manchurian autumn sparkled overhead from the fire of the sunset. Rare clouds had soft pink or coppery shades; the deep sky was like dark blue brocade and began to shine with silver in the East where mountains were already sparkling. The air was warm, dogs barked in a village, a donkey brayed and cows lowed. The grey bivouac was quieting down. The smell of cabbage soup and of fresh bread floated from it; and taking cover under the tents it resembled a great beast that was settling to rest.

Sablin approached the edge of the bivouac and sat down under a large tree. Its shadow thrown by the moon was becoming more and more distinct and at last concealed Sablin from view. The tents of the bivouac began to appear like yellow spots. The soldiers had lit candles in them preparing themselves for sleep. Three voices, probably belonging to officers, tenor, bass and baritone were singing near by. They sang well and the three voices which were evidently accustomed to each other, blended in beautiful harmony of the sad and touching tune. Sablin listened to the words and felt disgusted.

They were singing a cynical dirty song which described the

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grey Russian life in an abominable colouring and sang it to this beautiful tune which touched the very soul.

"How can Russian educated men revel in this dirt and obscenity? Can it be that this and not a prayer, a hymn or a bold mighty battle song of a Russian soldier accompanies them to battle? They are going into action tomorrow!" thought Sablin. He rose and walked towards the bivouac.

### XV

HE passed the tents in the darkness, looking into those where lights were burning and soldier voices were heard. No one recognised him.

"Who goes there?" was sometimes asked from the tents.

"Friend," answered Sablin and went on. He enjoyed the warm moonlit night and the nearness of people who were going into action.

"How good it is of our mother the Tsaritsa," Sablin heard a voice say. "She has thought of us and all the presents are well chosen. Some good man must have advised her. A good shirt this is too. I will put it on for the battle. If I get killed I shall then appear in the Tsaritsa's shirt before the eyes of God."

"You are a fool," a grim hoarse voice interrupted him.

"You're another," said the first voice.

"Put the light out and don't scatter your things about. You aren't alone in the tent. It's the last candle end we've got."

"Keep quiet."

Sablin walked up quietly to the tent and looked inside. Four soldiers were stretched upon a litter of straw. A fifth had spread near the entrance the handkerchief in which the presents had been wrapped and examined its contents. He now held the portrait of the Empress in his hands and looked at it attentively.

"I am thankful for her portrait. She is beautiful and her children are darlings. I have seen many noble people in my life but one can immediately see that she is a noble among nobles."

"Slave!" said a grim looking thin soldier who lay next to him.

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"Have you forgotten your peasant life, Filip Ivanovitch?" asked a bearded soldier with a good natured face.

"I have never worked on the land. My father rented a bar in the Commercial fleet and I have always sailed with him as a boy. Many wonderful foreign places have I seen; we have been four times round the world. Yes. . . . When I grew up I started a business of my own, but it didn't go well. Then I got the job of butler in a dragoon regiment's Mess. Yes . . . a fine time it was. Much money flowed past me. Debts were not paid sometimes and I just held on by a thread; some beat me, others lavished gold upon me; but I could not leave, so merry it was. The gentlemen liked me and I can say that I loved them."

"Because you're a slave!"

"Don't swear, Zahar Petrovitch. I am not speaking for your benefit."

"I can't listen to your disgusting stories."

"Well don't. I don't compel you to. . . . Yes. . . . You only made me lose the thread of my thoughts, Mr. Zakrevsky. A fine time we had at the dragoon regiment. All the officers were good fellows. Colonel von Stein was in command. They would have merry evenings at the Mess sometimes. . . . They would get drunk and perform regimental drill round the table. Buglers would give signals and they would roar the orders all at the same time. Then von Stein would shout: 'There are no gentlemen!' and all would get under the table as quick as they could. There was a stout major Ousoff among them, he would also puff and snort and run on all fours under the table. There they would sit until von Stein shouted: 'gentlemen exist!' and all would then dash out from under the table. A merry time it was!"

"The scoundrels! Call themselves nobles after that!"

Filip Ivanovitch glanced sideways at the speaker and replied nothing.

"I remember how they once decided to have a funeral of Lieutenant Serejnikoff."

"Did he die?" asked the bearded soldier.

"No, he was only quite drunk. They constructed a litter,

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read all sorts of nonsense over him and then carried him home to his wife singing funeral hymns. And what would you think? . . . A month later his horse slipped at the manœuvres, fell and crushed him. He died two weeks after the accident. Their joke had evidently displeased God."

"Jolly glad he perished," growled the thin soldier.

"Oh! the scoundrels!" exclaimed Zakrevsky.

"What did they do to you, Zahar Petrovitch? They enjoyed themselves and no one suffered from it. They did beat people at times but they always generously rewarded the offended. You had only the pleasure of getting easily earned money. . . . Yes. . . . There had been a Captain Krasilnikoff in the regiment. A good gentleman. Once they all got drunk and towards morning decided to drive round the town. They assembled izvostchiks but Krasilnikoff stayed behind for some reason and did not get one. I led him out of the Mess because he could hardly stand on his feet and he said: 'Filip Ivanovitch, tell me, my dear friend, is it decent for a nobleman to walk when tight?' I kept silent. He continued: 'No, Filip Ivanovitch, a nobleman shall never walk when tight.' He would lose his dignity otherwise. He must have something to drive on.' A hearse was passing at that time. 'Stop' shouted Krasilnikoff,—'it isn't quite decent, this chariot, but it's better than to walk. Help me in, Filip Ivanovitch.' He seated himself on the hearse and made the driver gallop after the rest of the party."

"I would spit in your face, Filip Ivanovitch, if I didn't think it degrading for myself. An animal has more self respect than you have!"

Filip Ivanovitch assumed a sorrowful expression, shook his head and said:

"I see that I have been casting pearls before swine and that you haven't understood me. No, I shan't meet such gentlemen again as lived in bygone days!"

He tied up the presents in the handkerchief, stowed it in his haversack, and asked as he stretched himself on the straw:

"Shall I put the light out?"

No one answered. Filip Ivanovitch blew out the candle and



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darkness stood in the tent. Sablin quietly walked away. Lights were being put out here and there and the bivouac had a mysterious appearance in the moonlight.

Sablin met two soldiers returning drunk from the village.

"Ough! The d . . . d Chinaman! Served three glasses only for the sugar and the shirt. He wouldn't even take the portrait."

"Why did she send it," said the second soldier,—“of what use is it to us!”

"Hell. . . . Think of the diamonds that were on her. One could buy a whole village with them. She would have done better by selling them and sending vodka to the soldiers than presents and portraits!"

"The Chinaman gave three glasses for the whole present. And it's called a Tsar's present!"

They went on swearing and stumbling over tent pegs trying to find their own tent.

"These fellows will also go into action and may die tomorrow," thought Sablin.

## XVI

ON his way back to Petersburg, Sablin felt a desire to tell the whole truth, all that he had seen. But what was the truth? Did he know it? He had seen excellent units and had met men in rags, but did not know the reason for this difference. He could not have named the Commanders of the good and of the bad units. He had been presented to Kuropatkin and Kuropatkin had charmed him. All that he had said was clever and wise. It seemed that it was no fault of Kuropatkin that the war was unsuccessful. He had foreseen and reported everything. He could not tell this to the Emperor, because it would have been equal to accusing him of responsibility for all the misfortunes, and he honestly believed the Emperor to be free from blame.

When the day of the audience came and the Emperor and the Empress received him in the evening after supper in the presence of only one Maid of Honour, Sablin described in pleasant and vivid colours the scenes he had witnessed. The order in the

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Army was excellent, Kuropatkin was an able and gifted leader and had a thorough grasp of the situation. The soldiers were modest heroes who loved the Emperor and were ready to die for him. Everything was going on well.

The Emperor listened to Sablin, looking at him with large sad eyes. He thanked Sablin for his report and rewarded him with a decoration. Shaking hands with Sablin he looked for a moment queerly into his eyes as if reproaching him for his lies. Sablin felt burning shame when he left the palace, as if he had done something exceptionally mean. But thinking things over, he came to the conclusion that he could not have made a different report. He had no grounds to blame anyone and he would have had to remain silent or to say what he had said.

In December Port Arthur unexpectedly surrendered. That had never happened in Russian history, and the shadows of the defendants of Pskov, Sebastopol and Bayedzid seemed to rise in anguish from their graves. Fortresses had been abandoned, but they had never been surrendered. The fact was terrible because it made evident a new defect in the Army—weakness of spirit. But everyone soon quieted down after having accused Stessel and attached a label of traitor to him. The war was too distant and did not touch Petersburg, where the same noisy and merry life was proceeding. People enjoyed themselves more than usual and only the great fluffy fur caps of men leaving for the front reminded one of the war. The usual flow of life was not altered on the banks of the Neva.

That day the first shot was fired at the Emperor. A shrapnel, its fuse set a point blank range was directed at the Imperial pavilion across the Neva by the hand of a traitor, a soldier of a Guard battery which had to fire the salute. But the attempt did not meet with success, the bullets having whizzed over the heads of the Emperor and those surrounding him, tearing some of the regimental colours which were behind and smashing windows in the palace. No one had the courage to bring the truth to light. The battery was the same in which the Emperor had served and which his uncle, the Grand Duke Sergei Mihailovitch, had commanded in his young days. No one could confess

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that treason had penetrated there, that men who could be willing to murder the Tsar existed among the Guards. All was explained by an accident. It was much simpler thus. Sablin was deeply impressed by this event and expected that the Commander of the battery would take some action. "There are only two issues before him," thought Sablin, "suicide or the monastery." But the Commander of the battery tried to exculpate himself, the incident was hushed up and he was transferred to an Army unit. No one was punished.

Sablin expressed his indignation but did not meet with sympathy anywhere. With horror he began to see that not the intellectual classes only had lost their feeling of love for the Emperor. The old noble classes, the high society which had always supported the Tsar and the Throne now was also infected. "We" became of more importance than "He." The honour of the uniform, traditions, personal welfare of separate individuals met with more consideration than did the Emperor. The Guards accepted this fact in silence.

## XVII

THE Sablins, Paltoffs, Rotbeks, Vorobieffs, Matzneff and Gritzenko had agreed to go on a party on the 9th of January to a restaurant on the outskirts of the town to listen to the singing of the "tziganes." The date had been fixed some time previously. After the fall of Port Arthur Natalia Borisovna Paltoff had been seized by a desire to enjoy herself at any price. She hoped to forget thus the shame of the defeats. But large disturbances took place at Petersburg on the 9th of January, the troops shot into the crowd, many people were killed and windows smashed in the Nevsky. Sablin was certain that their party would have to be postponed, but at eleven o'clock Ste-pochka Vorobieff came as he had agreed to do. Countess Paltoff dressed in a black silk evening gown arrived soon after with her husband and then Rotbek with his little gay wife Nina Vasilievna. They waited in the drawing room for Matzneff and Gritzenko, exchanging impressions of the day.

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"I think that it would be better to postpone our party," said Sablin. "It isn't safe even."

"Nonsense; it is safer today than at any other time. The whole of the police is on the lookout and half of the garrison is camping in the streets. These field kitchens and picket lines about the town remind me of Paris pictures in 1814," said Paltoff, "I think that the ladies would be interested to see it."

Paltoff was in high spirits. His company had passed the whole day in the streets and had shot at the mob. He was pleased that everything had come off smoothly. It had been rumoured that the soldiers would refuse to open fire and would murder their officers if they tried to arrest their leaders. The officers had received an order to be at the barracks before dawn. At six o'clock in the morning Paltoff had arrived at the barracks accompanied by his junior officers. He felt uneasy as he mounted the stairs dimly lit by lamps blackened by smoke and entered the dark corridor leading to the bedrooms. Noise and shouts came from there. It even seemed to Paltoff that he heard whistles. But he met with the usual scene as he swung open the heavy doors. The air was close, lamps lit dimly the large hall with beds standing in rows and lithographs and time tables pinned to the walls. The winter night reigned on the other side of the dark windows.

The men in overcoats, caps and cartridge pouches on white straps stood in a long line along one of the walls holding their rifles at "order arms." The sergeant ordered "attention." Everything was as usual, as if they were going out for drill or short manoeuvres. Paltoff greeted the company, the men answered smartly and he saw the same familiar sleepy faces as he walked down the ranks. The sergeant followed him grunting discontentedly from time to time as he adjusted the straps of the men. Paltoff thought that it was perhaps necessary to say something to the soldiers, to tell them that they might have to shoot and to remind them of their oath of allegiance.

But what should he say? He did not understand himself what was happening at Petersburg. It had been rumoured that the workmen intended to go to the Emperor's palace and pre-

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sent their demands. Some said that this had economical grounds, that they desired to work less and to receive more, others insisted that the socialists were behind it all and that the workmen would demand the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, the abdication of the Emperor and immediate peace with Japan. The Emperor was not in Petersburg but it was impossible to allow any demonstrations and it had been ordered to fire on the crowds in case of disobedience. What would he say then? Would the soldiers understand him? Count Paltoff had a very vague idea of it all himself and he realised that it would be better to say nothing. He asked, not addressing anyone in particular: "Have the cartridges been issued?" "Yes," answered someone's grim voice from the ranks. Paltoff ordered: "Right face!" The company turned heavily and remained motionless.

"Forward march!" the boots clattered and creaked down the corridor.

It was not so dark in the streets. Lamps were still burning, but pale grey dawn was approaching. There were no passers-by. Dvorniks were sweeping the snow off the pavements and scattering snow over them. The air was calm and frosty. The snow creaked under the feet of the company as it lined up down the street. Paltoff led his company towards the appointed place. He felt more at ease now and only wanted to sleep. Rare passers-by, servants with baskets and postmen began to appear in the streets. The lamps burned no longer. Dawn had already broken, the sky had a greenish tint and light clouds floated over the houses. Smoke rose in columns out of many chimneys. Bells sounded from many church towers announcing an early service.

They arrived at the designated crossing of streets and halted. Time seemed to pass very slowly, and they did not know what to do. One of the officers found a small inn near-by and Count Paltoff went there with the officers leaving the sergeant in charge of the company. It was necessary to fill the time. They sat in a small room at a little table covered with a clean white cloth. Large tea pots, glasses, bread and butter were placed be-



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fore them. Izvostchiks and dvorniks were drinking tea in the next large room. Men came and went throwing coppers on the counter and ordering tea.

It was broad daylight when they left the inn. The street was full of people, men went to and fro, some were hurrying, others walking slowly. The movement was unusual but there was nothing dangerous in it. The soldiers stacked their rifles and crowded round them. Some sat on curb stones and dozed. Several of the passers-by tried to stop near the company but numerous policemen drove them away.

About noon the rumble of a volley was heard near-by, and was soon followed by a second. Then all was silent again. Several men with pale faces ran down the street. One of them had lost his cap. The passers-by disappeared as if by magic. Paltoff formed his company, and another half hour passed. Men began to appear at the end of the street. They not only covered both pavements but overflowed into the middle of the street which was soon filled by a compact black crowd. Suddenly red banners were unrolled in two or three places. Something was being sung in the crowd, but one could not yet make out the words. An izvostchik dashed in front of the crowd towards Paltoff's company. A deathly pale police officer sat in the sledge. He was without a cap, his face was blood-stained and bruised and his sword had been torn away.

He came up to Paltoff and raising his hand to his head in salute, evidently forgetting that he had no cap on, reported in a shaky voice.

"You will have to shoot. They are quite mad and have murdered a policeman. See what they have done to me."

Paltoff drew up his men across the street and looked at the soldiers. They were grimly calm. Fury against the crowd was boiling in Paltoff: "What do the fools want?" he thought,—"Jews incite them and they advance only to get shot!" The crowd came nearer and halted. Red banners quietly floated over it. Something was painted on them in black sprawling letters. Paltoff looked at the inscriptions. "Down with autocracy!" was written on one. "Long live socialism! The Social Revolu-

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tionary Party," was to be seen on another. He felt that the blood flowed away from his brain, he hardly heard what the police officer was continuing to report about killed men, upset telephone posts and barricades. Paltoff left the company and followed by a bugler went towards the crowd, lightly stepping over the snow. He had never walked so easily. The snow was deep in some places, in others it had been made smooth and slippery by the sledges but Paltoff did not notice this. He felt as if he was walking upon air.

"Listen!" he said and felt surprised at the hard calm tone of his voice. It seemed to him that someone else was speaking, so strange was the sound of his own words as they reached his ears. "I request you to disperse and to stop rioting!"

The crowd was silent, only the quick breathing of excited people was heard. Suddenly two men came forward. A schoolboy of about sixteen walked over the snow with his arm clasped round the neck of a young man of about twenty with a bluish pale face covered with coal dust. He was dressed in a dark overcoat, torn trousers and had a grim and sullen appearance.

The schoolboy halted two paces from Paltoff and addressed the soldiers in a voice stammering with excitement.

"Comrades! We are the workmen and inhabitants of Petersburg! Our wives, our children and our parents are all going to our father, the Tsar, to seek truth and defense. We are in poverty, we are oppressed and burdened by exhausting labour, we are not considered as men but as slaves. We have stood it all, but. . . ."

"Silence!" Paltoff said imperatively. "Disperse immediately!"

"I cannot be silent!" exclaimed the schoolboy growing pale.

"Disperse! I have orders to open fire and I will do my duty," Paltoff said firmly.

"You ran from the Japanese and now you're showing us how brave you are!" a woman shouted from the crowd. She was simply dressed, but wore a fur coat and had a muff in her hands.

"Again I ask you to disperse. Otherwise I will open fire and

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you—you will be responsible for the death of innocent people you have misled,” said Paltoff.

“Murderers, hangmen, crows!” came from the crowd.

“We will treat the Tsar as he treats us. He wants us to die for him in Manchuria, but he can wait for it now!” said the workman who had come forward with the schoolboy.

“We have no Tsar! What kind of a Tsar is he!” shouted the same woman.

“Disperse! I am going to open fire immediately!”

Paltoff turned and walked behind the ranks of his company.

“Don’t be afraid, comrades, press forward! They have blank cartridges!” shouts were heard in the crowd.

Paltoff gave an order. The company shuddered in an obedient movement and raised their rifles. Paltoff felt that the military mechanism of his company was in perfect working order and grew reassured.

The crowd swayed on the same spot.

“We cannot go back!” shouts were heard. “We shall die either way!”

But no one went forward.

Then the man who had stood at the side of the schoolboy stepped forward and shouted:

“Come, comrades, don’t be afraid! Forward! I will be the first to die for the people!”

He advanced and the crowd moved after him. Those behind pressed against the front ranks and they had to move on.

“Company!” ordered Paltoff.

A sinister silence followed. Someone exclaimed plaintively: “They have blank cartridges!”

The crowd moved forward.

“Fire!” Paltoff could scarcely utter the word.

The sharp rattle of the rifles cut the air. Terrible shrieks were heard. . . . The red banner vanished, the crowd fled in panic. The schoolboy, the woman with the muff and several men were stretched on the snow. Men ran down the street shrieking wildly. . . . The police officer appeared from behind the company. He looked pleased and happy. He called out the

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dvorniks of the houses to carry away the killed and the wounded and shouted wrathfully:

"Clear these . . . away, and quick! Ah! The scoundrels, the d . . . d cowards!"

"Draw cartridge!" Paltoff ordered. He also was triumphant—his company had stood the test.

The order to return to the barracks came at six o'clock. Paltoff led the company back and then drove home. He was too excited to eat, stretched himself on a sofa in his study and fell asleep. His wife woke him at ten o'clock.

"Are we going?" she asked.

"Of course we are," said Paltoff and hurriedly began to get ready. Triumph filled his soul and he felt the hero of the day. The victory had been his. It would be so pleasant to sup now in merry company and to listen to the tziganes.

## XVIII

At last Gritzenko and Matzneff arrived. They were late because they had decided to drive through the town to ascertain the state of things. Sablin spoke to them of his apprehensions.

"Of course we can go," Matzneff said lazily,—*"there are no traces of these scoundrels."*

"The theatres are open," said Gritzenko,—*"I have seen people driving there."*

"The socialists have been defeated," said Matzneff. "How did your soldiers behave?" he asked Paltoff.

"Splendidly, the volley was excellent."

"Were many killed?"

"About thirty, I think."

"I must confess that I wasn't quite certain of your men. In the Semenovsky regiment eight soldiers didn't fire. They are going to be court-martialled. The Moskovsky and the Egersky regiment didn't fire at all," said Matzneff.

"This beast Gapon has turned their heads," said Sablin. "They carried ikons, banners, sang prayers. I can't understand this muddle. Where did this priest come from?"

"What priest is he," said Steepochka. "Do you know the de-

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mands they put forward? I have read a copy of their petition to the Emperor. "Land must be distributed among the people and easy credit made possible. The indirect taxes must be replaced by an income tax."

"Fine!" laughed Rotbek.

"Then—the war should be stopped at the wish of the people." "

"That smells of Japanese money. Now when we're nearing victory!" said Gritzenko.

"But the best of all comes at the end: 'The Government should be responsible to the people, the church separated from the state and a Constituent Assembly convoked.' "

"I have personally seen their banners 'Down with autocracy,' " said Paltoff.

"What does this mean then? A revolution?" asked the Countess Natalia Borisovna.

"Yes, if you like," Vorobieff answered.

"And when! During the war!" said Rotbek.

"No," Sablin said, "I am certain that the workmen are not responsible for this."

"Of course not," said Matzneff. "It is the work of the socialists and of our intellectual classes who are constantly seeking something and do not know themselves what they want."

"Your French revolution has turned their heads," said Vera Constantinovna.

"Ah, there was a Napoleon in my French revolution," Matzneff replied.

"And here—the priest Gapon!" Rotbek exclaimed laughing.

"So you think that it is ended?" asked Vera Constantinovna.

"Oh, quite, once and for all," Paltoff said. "Russia isn't in danger so long as our fine Guards exist, so long as the soldiers obey the officers and the officers remain faithful to the throne. I felt that I was big and strong today when I gave the order to my company. My will was the will of hundreds of men. They were as obedient machines in my hands."

"Well, let us start then," said Rotbek. "Pavel Ivanovitch, have you got everything ready?"



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"Yes. Mesdames, the programme is the following: two chorus girls,—one a lyric singer."

"Morgenstern, of course," said Sablin.

"You have guessed," answered Gritzenko, sighing and comically lowering his eyes.

"Oh!" exclaimed Nina Vasilievna, "at last we shall see your . . . your flame."

"The other is French."

"Is she very . . . ?" Vera Constantinovna asked.

"Very," Gritzenko answered laughing, "but I have warned her to be careful. . . ."

"Why?" Nina Vasilievna asked naïvely.

"And then, mesdames, it will be in French and much can be excused in a foreign language. We shall pretend not to understand. After that we shall have supper and listen to the tziganes with Stesha and Sandro Davidoff."

"Oh, it does promise to be interesting. We mustn't lose time," Natalia Borisovna said, rising.

## XIX

THEY were expected at the restaurant on the outskirts of the town. The porter threw open the doors before them and they ascended a broad wooden staircase covered by a red carpet. Mirrors in gilded frames reflected the handsome officers and the beautiful faces of ladies flushed with the frost.

Vera Constantinovna was disappointed. She had expected to find marvellous luxury in this notorious place but everything was clumsy and lacked taste. A stout Tartar waiter with a shaven head, dressed in an evening coat and white waistcoat, led them through a wide corridor covered by a soft carpet to a room which had been reserved for them. A table was laid for supper in the centre of the room. The windows were hung with heavy curtains and withered palms stood before them. A piano, a broad sofa covered by a rug and cushions, and several arm chairs completed the furniture. There was nothing cosy about the place. The ladies looked round with contempt. All of them had the same thoughts. Here their husbands tried to

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forget them for a while with chorus and ballet girls. This was the famous "reserved room." They put their hats scornfully on a small table before a mirror. "What kinds of people have put their hats here," they thought.

"Look, Vera," Natalia Borisovna said,—“the whole mirror is covered with inscriptions.”

"Ah, yes. A heart pierced by an arrow and 'A.S.' beneath it. Is it you by any chance, Alexander?"

"Mesdames," Gritzenko said, "it isn't the custom' to read aloud the inscriptions on mirrors and fences. You may reveal other people's secrets. What would you prefer to have with the fish—sauce provençale or mushroom?"

Gritzenko sent for tea and champagne, but the conversation flagged. The officers felt constraint before the ladies of the regiment and could not get into the spirit of the place. At last the actress Morgenstern arrived. All knew that she lived with Gritzenko, that she was a late but real love of Pavel Ivanovitch and all were interested to see her. A slim young girl in a white dress with a high collar entered the room. She had a simple face with large blue eyes that looked frightened. Gritzenko and Rotbek rushed to meet her.

"Alexander Nicolaievitch," Countess Paltoff asked Sablin in a loud whisper, "what must we do? Must we shake hands?"

Sablin shrugged his shoulders and Matzneff had to save the situation by introducing her to the ladies:

"Maria Feodorovna Onegine,—Countess Natalia Borisovna Paltoff, Vera Constantinovna Sablin, Nina Vasilievna von Rotbek."

The ladies coldly shook hands. A young man in a black evening dress, bald in spite of his youth, meanwhile slipped through the door to the piano and struck several chords. The ladies sat down on the sofa, arranging their dresses with disdain; the officers settled in arm chairs around them. A moment of silence followed. The singer did not feel at ease before the ladies, who were unceremoniously looking her over and exchanging remarks at her expense.

"People always seek for contrasts," Countess Paltoff said

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quietly to Vera Constantinovna. "The dark Gritzenko and—look at her—quite a pretty Finnish girl."

"She isn't pretty at all," said Vera Constantinovna.

The singer told the accompanist by a glance to begin and he struck several chords.

She sang a quiet, sad song speaking of recollections of youth. Involuntary sadness was reflected in her eyes. She sang well and each word conveyed much power of feeling. But she created an atmosphere of sad thoughts which did not agree with the mood of the visitors. They continued to whisper among themselves.

Onegina finished her song, sadly looked round upon the guests and began another which was full of passionate grief. Vera Constantinovna was impressed but the rest began to be impatient. Gritzenko felt that Onegina did not meet with success and led her away. The accompanist followed her out with a bent head like an obedient dog.

Constrained silence reigned in the room.

"They are nice, these songs with tears in them," said Countess Paltoff, "but, . . . they need a different mood in the hearers."

"You have chosen the wrong moment to serve this dish, Pavel Ivanovitch," Matzneff said. "It would have been excellent after drinking a good deal when the heart would be overcome and one would feel inclined to weep and to dream. Then these sad eyes and that strained, passionate voice would have been good. We would not even need passion after being surfeited but we want something fiery for the start. As it is we are cold."

At that moment the doors swung open and a little black-and-red fiend, as Nina Vasilievna classified her, ran into the room. It was the diseuse Ivette. Her black hair was piled on her head, diamonds were scattered over it and two black aigrettes rose like horns over her brow. Her tight fitting black dress was cut extremely low both in front and back and she appeared half naked. Her black skirt, caught up with red roses, barely reached her knees. Silk stockings, so transparent that they were hardly visible, covered her legs. Ivette tripped lightly among the ladies and the officers, saying words of greeting and almost sitting

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down on their knees. She filled the room with a sharp aroma of perfume and passion. Vera Constantinovna noticed that the nostrils of the men were quivering and their eyes becoming dimmed.

Mademoiselle Ivette began to tell an amusing story, walking about the room, stretching herself in an arm chair and rising again to sip nervously a glass of champagne. The story was quite decent and the ladies were disappointed.

"Where does the 'very' come in then?" Nina Vasilievna asked.

"Immediately," Gritzenko answered,—*"Mademoiselle Ivette, please tell us, 'c'est ici.'"*

"Oh!" said Ivette, her eyes round with feigned horror, and began to speak.

The ladies now had to shield their faces with fans so as not to see the men. They were ashamed of their husbands.

Ivette ended the story, clapped her hands, and the same accompanist slipped up to the piano. She began to sing a risqué song *"les noisettes."*

"I should never dream that a song could be so. . . ." said Nina Vasilievna.

"Horrible . . ." added Vera Constantinovna.

"How corrupt the men are," drawled Countess Paltoff.

Rotbek had made each lady sip at a separate glass and had drunk it down afterwards. He was half drunk and hummed: "*Il cueillit six noisettes dans son après midi. . . .*" Sasha, could you do it? Six? I couldn't."

"Stop, Pik! You are quite mad!" said Countess Paltoff. "Poor Nina is almost fainting."

"Petia, I shall leave if you don't stop this immediately," Nina Vasilievna said with tears in her eyes.

"Six! Only to think of it! Quatre happened, but six. . . . He must have been a smart fellow this Colin!"

## XX

THE supper passed merrily. Everyone joked, laughed and told anecdotes.

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"No, for heavens sake," exclaimed the ladies,—“don't dot the 'i's,' it's quite clear enough.”

But they immediately put these dots themselves. Nina Vasilievna pretended to be naïve and put impossible questions. It was Rotbek's turn this time to stop her by exclamations, although he was half conscious from drink.

“Nina! Shame!”

Stepochka outdid himself. Sablin told anecdotes in Russian and in French. The ladies were now feeling quite at home and the atmosphere of the “reserved room” surrounding them made them appear in a new and alluring light to their husbands. The fruit had already been finished, and the waiters had placed chairs for the tzigane choir but it did not appear. The Maitre d'hotel twice approached Gritzenko, whispering something in his ear. Gritzenko left the room and returned flushed and looking angry.

“What's wrong?” asked Stepochka.

“Stesha doesn't want to sing. She says that too many people have been killed today.”

“How stupid of her. Who is she? Is she a ‘red?’” asked Natalia Borisovna.

“No, simply a fool. She will come all right. It's mere coquettishness. She wants to make herself more highly valued.”

The singers entered the room at that moment as if to prove the correctness of his words. Eight tzigane women came first. All were dark, ugly, with black hair and large mysterious eyes. They were clad in a mixture of ball dresses and the bright coloured rags of a gypsy camp with black lace pelerines. The men came behind, some in plain clothing, others in embroidered gypsy jackets. Sandro Davidoff stepped forward holding a guitar with a white ribbon attached to it.

The ladies looked at the gypsies who boldly returned their gaze, laughing and talking among themselves, the men stood behind, ugly, serious and with an air of importance about them. The stout, bald Sandro who did not look like a gypsy began by singing in a deep voice a well known romance, the chorus accompanying him melodiously.



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A dashing dance song followed. The gypsies danced in wild frenzy one after another, shrieking to the rhythm of the song.

Song followed song, some in Russian, others in gypsy dialect. The air was becoming hot and close in the room and Steepochka proposed to open the window.

Matzneff pulled the curtains aside, and the pale morning light penetrated the room. Small wooden houses and dark trees covered by soft snow were seen outside. Three peasant sledges passed down the street. Women wrapped in large grey shawls were taking milk to the town.

The window was opened and the cold air streamed into the room bringing the morning freshness with it.

"The ladies will catch cold," said Steepochka.

A fragment of distant singing, harmonious and majestically sad, suddenly floated into the room. All started and listened. The gypsies rushed to the window. The singing came nearer and nearer. The ladies were startled. All rose and looked through the window.

A huge black crowd of people was coming down the street. Four simple wooden coffins covered by wreaths with red ribbons swayed over their heads.

"You have fallen in desperate strife  
The victims of love for the people  
For their freedom, honour and life  
You have given all that you had"

young male and female voices sang in the crowd.

"The funeral of the victims of the revolution," Stesha said sadly,—"your victims, gentlemen!" she shrieked and rushed out of the room.

The chorus followed her.

"What is it? What is it?" Steepochka was repeating.

"Take the ladies home, I will pay the bill," said Gritzenko.

"How disgusting!" muttered Matzneff.

"They think they'll prove something by all this," said Sablin, helping his wife to put on her sable coat.

Rotbek was also helping his wife with her coat. She was

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crying. Vera Constantinovna looked pale, and Countess Paltoff laughed nervously.

"The villains," she was saying through fits of laughter, "they have rejected God, religion, everything and are pleased about it. Victims! Strife! Great God! Too few have been executed!"

The crowd had passed the restaurant and was disappearing down the street. No one had closed the window and the words of the touching melody penetrated feebly into the room, mingled with the frosty morning air.

"The scoundrels!" Matzneff said once more through his teeth.

### XXI

ON the 6th of October 1905 Sablin rode into the yard of a factory in the suburbs of the town. Twenty mounted troopers accompanied him. Thin cold rain was pattering slowly. The Cossacks, whom Sablin had come to relieve, were preparing to depart. Tall, muscular men led their bay horses out of a barn and lined up in the yard. A young Cossack Captain with a little pointed red beard which sparkled with drops of rain stood in the doorway of the factory office and waited for Sablin.

"So you have found our hole, Captain," he said, shaking hands and giving his name. "A rotten place. Everything is quiet and no signs of a strike. Mostly women work here. A table is reserved for you at the office and there is quite a nice girl working there. She's a staunch monarchist. You can pass the time quite agreeably if you choose. It is a little awkward that you will have to take your meals with the manager but he is a very nice man—a Swede—and a most amiable host. He seems to be clever and highly educated."

The Cossack corporal showed Sablin's men where to put their horses. The Cossacks mounted.

"Well, good-bye and good luck. I shall have to relieve you tomorrow—an unfortunate and unpleasant fact for me. The whole of our regiment is out doing patrol work. Last week I spent three days at the Putiloff works. It was disgusting. The workmen were on strike but were quite friendly with us. The whole show is so stupid!"

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The Captain leapt into his saddle and rode out of the yard followed by his Cossacks. Sablin saw them leave, looked round the quarters of his men and went up a narrow stone staircase leading to the office.

The office was in a large room with three windows, the walls covered by oil paint. Five tables stood in it. At three of them sat young fellows in plain clothes who were writing busily. The fourth was occupied by a nice looking girl with slightly dishevelled hair falling in wayward locks over her ears, cheeks and brow. She had a provokingly turned up nose, small beautiful teeth and large hazel eyes with a bold sparkle in them. The fifth was left free for Sablin. He bowed to the company.

"How do you do," the young girl said quickly, "we are so glad that you have come. Boris Nicolaievitch, the Cossack officer, quite scared us by saying that he would leave at the appointed time without waiting to be relieved. We are so afraid to be left unprotected. Please, what is your name?"

"Alexander Nicolaievitch," said Sablin.

"This is your table, Alexander Nicolaievitch. I can bring you a book if you like. But I don't know whether it would interest you: 'Prince Serebrianny.' What a nice name you have, Alexander Nicolaievitch. Mine is Anna Iakovlevna, but I prefer to be called simply Nelly. Do you like to go to the theatre?"

"Yes," said Sablin.

"I also. I like the ballet, the opera, but best of all the drama. I have seen the 'Three Sisters' at the Moscow theatre. How beautiful it was! Or 'Tsar Fedor Ivannovitch' at Suvorin's. Orleneff played. Chekhoff is my favourite writer. Whom do you like best, Chekhoff or Gorky?"

The question was left unanswered.

"It has become difficult to live now, with these strikes. Who needs them? They are not useful to anyone. Our factory has not been on strike for a single moment. That is why we are so hated in the neighbourhood. Students came here and called us all sorts of bad names but we threw them out ourselves and then the Cossacks arrived. What a nice man their officer Boris Nicolaievitch is."

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Sablin listened to her chatter and continued to sit looking out the window, on the long narrow yard. A low barn, covered by sheet iron, stood at the opposite end. The red roof was glistening with moisture. Dark kitchen gardens covered by gloomy looking cabbage stumps, could be seen behind the barn. Wet, brown fields stretched farther on and a forest loomed in the distance. Fog floated over the earth, a train sped through the fields and dense white steam first stretched up in large curling clouds, then broke and flew low over the earth. Everything was damp, grey looking and gloomy.

A man dressed in a black wet overcoat and black soft felt hat which shone from the rain, stopped in the street before the gates, looked into the yard for some time in indecision and then entered and turned toward the barn. A soldier, Kushinnikoff, came out. Sablin could see his handsome round face with a black moustache. He was without an overcoat in an unbuttoned tunic. He assumed a picturesque attitude and lit a cigarette. The man in black approached him and began to say something. Kushinnikoff listened attentively. The man in black produced a sheet of paper from his pocket and they began to read together. Kushinnikoff laughed. Then he took the sheet and returned to the barn. The man in black quickly walked out of the yard.

"He has given him some propaganda," thought Sablin and ran down the stairs.

The yard was empty. He entered the barn. Saddled horses stood there and peacefully munched hay. A guard dozed in a corner. Sablin sent him to bring the section corporal and Kushinnikoff. The corporal appeared looking sleepy and discontented. Kushinnikoff saluted smartly and boldly looked at Sablin with his bright grey eyes.

"Kushinnikoff," Sablin said. "A civilian was here a few minutes ago and gave you a sheet of paper. Where is it? Give it up immediately."

"No, Your Honour, I have seen no paper. No one has been here," Kushinnikoff answered, growing pale.

"Why do you tell lies!" Sablin said. "Why? I saw you."

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You came out of the barn and lit a cigarette. A civilian dressed in a black overcoat came up to you and gave you a sheet of paper. You read it together, you laughed and he went away."

"No, Your Honour," Kushinnikoff answered,—“this did not happen."

"Am I lying then?"

"I don't know, Your Honour, only I have seen no civilian. I can swear to it."

"Ah, you villain! You lie! I shall have you court-martialled!"

"As you please, Your Honour," Kushinnikoff said humbly.

"Search the scoundrel!"

The corporal turned out his pockets, searched under his clothing.

"There is nothing, Your Honour," he reported.

"Search over all the quarters. Arrest this scoundrel and send him back to the regiment. He is to be kept under guard until I return. Liar! Receive propaganda. . . ."

"No, Your Honour, I can swear to it. It's as you like, you can have me sentenced, you're an officer. . . ." Kushinnikoff said, growing deathly pale.

"Silence!" shouted Sablin.

Working men and women crowded in the yard attracted by the noise. Sablin pulled himself together and returned to the office. He was boiling with indignation. He could not have been mistaken. It was Kushinnikoff. He clearly recollected how he had thought that he had a most typically Russian face. "At any rate," he decided,—“I have witnesses. Two of the clerks and Anna Iakovlevna sat at the windows, they must have seen the civilian in black." He raised his eyes. All the office people were crowding at the windows and displayed a marked interest in the proceedings. They must have seen the preceding incident.

"Gentlemen," he said entering the office, "several minutes ago a civilian entered the yard and talked to a soldier. Did you see this?"



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"We have seen nothing," said one of the youths as he sat down at his table and resumed his work.

"We didn't look outside," confirmed another.

"Anna Iakovlevna, and you, have you also seen nothing?"

Anna Iakovlevna became confused and blushed.

"I didn't look out of the window, Alexander Nicolaievitch, I was talking to you. There is nothing interesting out in the yard. Perhaps someone did come but I didn't notice it."

Sablin felt that all of them had seen it but that they sided with the soldier and the man in black because they feared them, but did not fear him, an officer. He felt disgusted. He unbuckled his sword, took off his great-coat, hung them on a peg near his table and sat down. He produced a French book he had brought and feigned to read it. The clerks continued to scribble. Anna Iakovlevna was sighing and at last grew bolder.

"What are you reading, Alexander Nicolaievitch?" she asked.

"A book," he replied.

"Oh, I love to read books. But I prefer the old literature to the modern. There can be nothing better than the "Obriv" of Gontcharoff. And whom do you like best, Leonid Andreieff or Turgenieff?"

Sablin did not answer. The clerks giggled and scribbled more noisily. Anna Iakovlevna grew red, buried herself in a huge office book, but could not keep silent.

"Do you know bookkeeping?" she asked.

Sablin did not answer. The clerks giggled again and Anna Iakovlevna looked offended. "Hang her!" thought Sablin.

## XXII

ALL left at three o'clock. The clerks in silence and without bowing, Anna Iakovlevna stretching out her little hand and saying capriciously: "Au revoir, until tomorrow."

A janitor swept up the office and opened the window. Early autumn dusk was falling outside. The factory continued to work noisily and the whole building shook nervously. A lamp with a green shade was lit on Sablin's table.

At six o'clock the janitor appeared again.

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"The manager invites you to dine with him, sir. I will show you the way."

Noticing that Sablin made a movement towards his great-coat and sword he added: "Leave it here, sir, all will be in order, I will see to it personally."

He led Sablin up and down the stairs and corridors and stopped before a door which he opened. Sablin entered a spacious hall and passed into a study where a clean-shaven bald little man rolled up to him on his short thick legs. He was extremely stout.

"I am glad, sincerely glad to see you," he said enveloping Sablin's hand in his fingers, warm and soft as if swollen with fat. "Please come with me to the dining room, everything is ready. The 'starka' is waiting for us."

He spoke perfect Russian with a hardly noticeable accent.

The dining room was agreeably warm. Wood crackled pleasantly in a huge fire-place, a shaded lamp hung from the ceiling, lighting a table covered by a faultlessly clean starched cloth and laid for two persons. A big fat smoked "sig," pink salmon cut in thin slices, mushrooms in sauce, sausages and ham decorated the table.

"I like good food, Captain," said the manager, pouring yellow vodka into small crystal glasses. "I am a Swede. We have the same custom as yours to provoke appetite before the dinner and I specially recommend this sig to your attention. I chose it personally when it was alive and have had it smoked. It tastes like cream."

Oscar Oscarovitch placed the back of the sig which was covered with a thin layer of fat on Sablin's plate. It was really excellent.

"I also recommend the salmon, I like our northern fish," Oscar Oscarovitch said as he poured out a second glass.

The amiable hospitality of this stout little man and the cosy atmosphere created by the vodka, the "zakouskas" and the crackling of the wood in the fireplace dispelled Sablin's gloomy mood. He ate with appetite the simple but good food that was served.

Both lit cigars after dinner. Sablin wanted to rise but Oscar

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Oscarovitch stopped him and said, rolling up an arm chair to the fireplace:

"Stay a little longer, Captain. Everything is quiet in my factory. The strikes and workmen's riots arise only because of a misunderstanding of the situation by the government. They direct their blows at the shafts and not at the horse. It is all the result of a policy which aims at the destruction of the Orthodox faith and autocracy in Russia and at the enslavement of the Russian people.

"But the revolution comes to us under the banner of liberty," said Sablin.

Oscar Oscarovitch placed his warm soft hand on Sablin's knee and said, puffing at his cigar:

"Do you know what the International is?"

"I have heard something about it, but I know nothing definite," answered Sablin.

"It's good that you don't know. Opinions differ about it. Some want to see in it something of a higher order than even Christianity, something all-human. They want to create not a State, not Nations, but something peculiar which would embrace the whole world . . . in other words a tower of Babel, turned inside out. I think of it differently. I don't know whether you are a believer, Captain, but it seems to me that the International is a teaching of the Antichrist. The ideas will bring the end of the world and the destruction of civilisation. Our government is short sighted and does not see the evil. Eight hours work per day, participation of the workmen in the management of industries and in the government are being claimed. This is excellent and not so terrible after all. But why do they speak of workmen only and not of peasants?"

"They give admission to all," said Sablin.

"No, Captain, it would still have been possible to fight them, had that been so. But they exclude everyone except themselves. Universal, direct, equal and secret voting has been created for them. One must know their leaders to understand the whole danger of such voting. Will you vote? No, because it disgusts you. Will a tradesman vote? No, he is too lazy for that. Will

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a peasant vote? No, he is too busy and it all appears to be too distant from his village. Who will vote then? Proletarians, hooligans, idlers and men of a similar kind. For whom will they vote? For the people that shall be pointed out to them. They will vote a list of the leaders appointed by the party and the party itself has been prepared abroad. First of all they need a general amnesty so that these agents of Satan can come here and start on their work of destruction. You have mentioned the word 'liberty.' It would be better to say that you have repeated it. What is liberty? Do you understand that word? Liberty of what?"

"Freedom of meetings, speech, strikes, inviolability of dwellings and of personality, as they put it," said Sablin.

"Excellent, excellent. But doesn't all this exist? Can't you assemble at a theatre, at a church, at a club or at your home? You are only prevented from meeting for purposes of destruction and murder. Is this unreasonable? Can you touch or offend even the lowest beggar? It is all provided for in our laws. No, Captain, they want something quite different. Two months ago I was in Switzerland on business and talked there to a certain Korjikoff. A terrible personality."

Sablin started.

"What was his name?"

"Korjikoff. Do you know him?"

"No," Sablin said in a dull voice. "Well, what about this Korjikoff?"

"He occupies a secondary position among them and is not initiated into all their secret plans. But he has a boy of nine years of age whom he brings up. He has the features of a cherub. You can see such faces on old Italian paintings. Ah! Captain, one can never forget this child once one has seen him."

"Where did he get this child?" asked Sablin, fixing his eyes on the fire.

"He is his son."

"His son? Korjikoff is married then?"

"He is a widower. It is said that his wife was wonderfully

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beautiful and died on giving birth to this child. It is rumoured that he isn't even Korjikoff's son. . . ."

Oscar Oscarovitch stopped talking and puffed at his cigar which had gone out.

"Yours is out too. Would you like another? A real Havana?"

"Well, what about this boy? Who was his father? What was the name of his mother?"

"I don't know. That is not important. The point lies in the way Korjikoff brings up his son. The boy has no idea of God. When they see churches Korjikoff talks of them as he would of ancient Greek mythology. The boy has no illusions. He knows the secret of his birth and has been convinced that there is no soul, that personality vanishes after death and that everything is permissible because there is no future life, no punishment and no reward. The boy is nine years old but he makes me think of a demon of the future."

"I have seen him throw a stone from behind a corner at a little English girl, daughter of wealthy parents. He used to cut kittens to pieces with a pen knife and to pick their eyes out while they were yet alive. I told his father about this and he only laughed, pulling at his nasty little beard: 'Let him get used to the sight of blood,' he said. 'Those who shall be strong enough to dare anything shall be the victors.' These are the people, Captain, who will lead the revolution in Russia. Do you think that it was Gapon who wrote his letters and appeals to the Tsar? No, it has all been inspired from there. They hope to destroy the whole European cultured world, to bring the peoples to a state of despair through hunger to enslave them and to build up their kingdom, the kingdom of Satan. Korjikoff told me openly: 'You have three whales on which your Christian world rests—Faith, Hope and Love. We shall destroy faith and prove that God does not exist, we shall replace hope by despair and love first by class, and then by general, hatred.' I remarked that people would then be transformed into animals living in caves and avoiding each other. 'That's exactly what we want,' he said. 'We shall remain. The workmen? The



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workmen are slaves. We use them as a tool, as a dark power, as cannon fodder.' The socialists do not understand this and work for them. 'Russian socialists,' Korjikoff told me, 'are docile good natured idiots, who are ready to sacrifice themselves as soon as we wave a red flag before them. They are our slaves, all these Risakoffs, Jeliaboffs and Koliaeffs.' It is difficult to do anything, Captain, under our present Government. It always comes five minutes late. A constitution should have been granted at the coronation of the Emperor Nicholas II—the Duma and a responsible Cabinet would have then destroyed the work of these demons,—but it is going to be given tomorrow when it has been wrenched from the Government by strikes and by riots. Ah, Captain, they are stronger than we are. Evil is with them and evil is stronger than good."

Oscar Oscarovitch was silent and puffed at his cigar.

"What would you prefer for supper, Captain,—boiled sturgeon with mushroom sauce or white partridges with bilberry and klukva jam? Both can be served."

"I hope you will excuse me," Sablin said rising, "if I decline your kind invitation for supper. I do not feel quite well and would like to go to bed earlier."

"You have probably caught a cold on your way here or I may have worried you by my chatter. But I will send you both and a bottle of warm Burgundy. It will do you good before you go to sleep. The sturgeon and the partridges are really fine. I have personally chosen them and I should be really pleased if you would accept."

## XXIII

THE large room with five tables and three uncurtained windows had a queer appearance in the dusk. Sablin extinguished the light. A bed had been prepared for him in a corner and a washstand placed near it. But he could not sleep. A lantern burnt outside in the yard and its reddish rays penetrated the room. The rain had ceased and the night frost had covered the pools of water in the yard with ice. The sky was starlit and the moon shone brightly. The white walls of the Novodevitchy mon-

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

astery and its churchyard were seen to the left. Lights twinkled there on some graves in ever-burning ikon lamps. The fields covered by cabbage stumps were straight before the windows. Sablin had had enough of the view during the day. The factory was working noisily all around him. The night-shift was on duty. The monotonous dull rumble and vibration of the building unnerved Sablin. It aroused thoughts about the past in connection with the words of the manager. Several courses, a bottle of wine and tea were served on a table lit by the moon. Sablin touched nothing. The cold linen of the bed attracted his body which was tired from being in a tight fitting tunic all day, but he did not think of lying down. He walked up and down the room watching his own shadow cast by the moon as it moved over the walls. Sometimes he halted and looked fixedly into the silvery gloom of the night.

"My Prince! My Prince!" He seemed to hear a ringing but distant voice. The vision came to him of a beautiful face with large radiant eyes and a tiny red body lying in an arm chair. His son. Why had he not thought that this unpleasant looking little creature was his son? Why had he not taken him? The son of his gentle Marousia had now become beautiful as an angel and wicked and cruel as a demon. Could he have taken him then? What would he have done with him at his flat, where would he have sent him? Marousia's secret and that of the insult he had suffered from Lubovin would then have been revealed.

Sablin ran his hands through his hair. No. . . . It was impossible then. Korjikoff would not have given him his son. He could not have fought Korjikoff,—the law would have been on his side, and it was impossible to reveal the whole secret of the child's birth. Now his son was growing up somewhere in distant Switzerland. Oscar Oscarovitch said that he had not been baptized but that the name Victor had been given him because he was intended to be a conqueror. His son Victor. He must be about ten years old now. Should he go to Switzerland and bring him back? But what would Vera Constantinovna say about this? It would mean the destruction of his family happi-

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ness. Nicolas, Tatiana and Victor. Victor, brought up in nihilism and deep cynicism, could not live with his brother Nicolas and good natured sister Tania!

"Vera," he would have to say, "he is my son." And everything that had already been forgotten about Marousia, Lubovin and the insult would then come to light.

The factory vibrated with the noise of machinery and of hundreds of lathes. Lights sparkled on the cemetery, the lantern burning in the yard resembled a red blurred spot. Ugly and artificial bustle reigned everywhere. The great town lived and swarmed like a mass of worms in a tin. The mystery of life was revealing itself in every house, beyond every window, dark or bright. Men were living and suffering there. Sablin thought of the numerous suicides that happened at night in Petersburg. Every hour carried new victims with it. We hear of them from police and newspaper reports but we do not see them because they hide from other human beings, seeking for loneliness.

Sablin seemed to see through the gloom a dark barn in a lonely yard full of old furniture among which an aged man tried to attach a rope to a beam and to tie it into a loop. Oh! what horror and cold must be filling his soul during these last terrible moments. It seemed to him that young girls were running towards the dark waters of muddy canals. What faced them in the dark depths at that minute? He saw the little rooms of dirty boarding houses on the outskirts of the town with close air and torn wall paper and youths with revolvers in their hands. Visions came to him of great bare black trees amid vast parks. The stretched bodies of youths and of young girls hung on their crooked branches. He saw benches on the edge of the waters where young people had gone for eternal sleep after a dose of poison. The phantoms of the night swept past and surrounded him, attracting and inviting him to follow in their wake.

"What is your life!" they told him,—*"shame and torture. How shall you reconcile the fact of your easy and wealthy life with Vera Constantinovna with that of Victor's existence? All your past is a mistake. You live on, attracted by mirages, while we have understood the meaning of life and we have left it."*

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The lights twinkled attractively in the monastery cemetery and the shadows of the dead beckoned him to join them in their cold rest. . . . "Faith, the Tsar, the Motherland," they whispered. "We have realised that they do not exist. Faith in God, but there is none, because miracles could happen if there were a God. You waver? Pray earnestly then. Fix your eyes on the Southwest where Switzerland lies. Korjikoff is there with your son. Pray that God may let you see him." "Oh, my Lord, I implore you with all the power of my faith to lead my gaze through space and let me see the face of my child through the gloom of the night!" Sablin waited. The thought passed through his feverish brain that the miracle might be accomplished. The darkness of the cold October night would be rent asunder and the face of his son would appear as if on the screen of a magic lantern. Some invisible threads certainly did unite them. But if nothing should appear, then there was no God. The same silvery night reigned outside, the stars glimmered quietly, the ice-covered roof shone with the moon's rays and the lantern burned dimly.

Then recollection of the cosy atmosphere of his own family, of Vera Constantinovna, of the pure and beautiful Kolia and Tania came to him. He thought of his children's bedroom with a huge ikon of the Holy Virgin and a tiny lamp burning before it.

His sword and revolver hung on the wall. It was dark in the room. Only the light of the lantern outside partially penetrated the room and Sablin saw the revolver. Why the revolver? Was it not a special sign? An answer of God to his defiance. "Take it, dare and you shall witness a miracle!"

Sablin thought of Baron Korff as he lay in his coffin. How cold and contemptuous his features had been. Something important seemed to have been revealed to him. Revealed there. Here everything would be as usual. A tortured conscience, his son Victor as an anarchist and a hooligan with the noble blood of the Sablins in his veins, Lubovin's insult, the Kushinnikoffs, the strikes and the shouts of the crowd: "murderers!"

Count Paltoff had told him of an episode. A young officer

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of an infantry regiment led a patrol of soldiers to relieve posts. A workman ran up to him, struck him a swinging blow on the face and ran away. The officer was at a loss what to do and the guard took no action. He returned to the regiment, said nothing about the event and went home. There he shot himself in the night. The soldiers told that a workman had struck their officer on the face and were asked why they had not tried to arrest him. Some answered that they had not dared to do it without an order, others said that they thought they could not leave the ranks when on the march. Several replied openly: "It was His Honour's business and did not concern us." Most of them kept sullen silence. Count and Countess Paltoff and the officers present considered that the young officer had done the right thing.

And Sablin continued to live after Lubovin's insult.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay!"

The vengeance was approaching. The insolent features of the boy with the beauty of an angel shone out of the misty distance and vengeance approached from there.

Sablin felt a cold chill down his spine.

"So you are afraid?"

Sablin walked firmly up to the wall and took the revolver out of its case.

"I fear nothing," he told himself.

"No, you are a coward," answered the same voice. "Dare! You shall see that there is no God and no eternal life. That there is nothing after death and that your 'ego' will not exist."

Sablin felt this "ego" in every part of his body. No, it could not vanish. He looked at the cemetery. The walls of the monastery behind it seemed whiter. The night was passing away. He examined the revolver. The bright nickel plate shone and it seemed to invite him to use its power.

"What am I doing? How stupid! My nerves have become too unstrung after all this. Someone less stable might have done it. We are all balancing on a rope. One wrong step and all is finished."

Sablin put the revolver back and returned to the window.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

A pale clear day was dawning. The cabbage stumps were lit by the slanting rays of the sun whose edge was appearing over the distant wood. The lantern gave no light in the deserted yard.

"There is, there is a God," whispered Sablin. "Let God arise and his enemies will scatter. My Lord, save me from the demons of the night!"

Something heaved over him, roared and rumbled with thousands of feet rushing down staircases and filled the air with human shouts. Sablin clutched at his heart. The factory whistle was screaming persistently, making his ears ring. Working men and women filled the yard, shouting and laughing. The night-shift had finished its work. Day was assuming its rights.

### XXIV

By telephone Sablin received an order to return to the barracks. A constitution had been declared and freedom of conscience, personality and of meetings had been granted. The people had obtained what they had striven for.

The sun was dully shining in a pale sky and the ice was melting under its rays. The streets were muddy. Crowds of people moved through them and gathered in groups. The town had a holiday-like appearance. Flags decorated the houses, red ribbons were seen here and there in the crowds and mutilated notes of the Marseillaise were heard. The police looked on indifferently. It had been vanquished. Sablin and his section felt awkward and out of place among these rejoicing multitudes.

"Long live the Army!" shouted a drunken workman.

"Murderers!" came from another direction.

A stout merchant drove past the section in a light carriage.

"Benefactors! But what will happen now! Don't deliver us to them, my dears!" he exclaimed waving his beaver fur cap at Sablin.

Sablin remembered that the Emperor had been against the constitution, and pounced upon the newspapers as soon as he returned home.

Yes. . . . The Imperial edict was there containing the vari-

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ous liberties. But the words remained that were golden to Sablin: "By the will of God, We, the Autocrat. . . ." All these liberties were not terrible so long as the Tsar was "by the will of God." Sablin read further about the freedom of the press, of meetings, conscience and of personality and about the convocation of a State Duma.

Blood rushed to his cheeks. "It is a fraud," he thought. . . . "A fraud signed by the Emperor. How could he have signed it?"

Quite simply. The edict had been prepared and brought to him with the words that it had to be signed for the welfare of the people.

"For the welfare of the people?" the Emperor must have said raising his beautiful eyes. Oh! Sablin could see those large grey eyes and the beautiful hand slowly moving over the parchment writing the characteristic signature. Sablin felt sadder than ever. He was losing his faith in the Tsar. He had often heard parallels drawn between the Emperor and the Tsar Feodor, the last Tsar \* of the Rurik dynasty. What had followed then. . . . Godunoff, the rule of the seven Boyars, the Touthinsky pretender, Zaroutsky and the Poles, blood and wailing everywhere, martyrdom and enslavement of the Moscow kingdom, long years of internal warfare and strife and then the election of Mihail Feodorovitch,† the first Romanoff and then Peter the Great. History was being repeated. But would he live long enough to witness a second Peter!

The sleepless night he had passed tormented by his conscience reacted now not in weariness but in a nervous tension. His heart beat quickly and his eyes sparkled from under swollen red eyelids. His face burned from the cold water with which he had refreshed it. Sablin asked the servant who was waiting upon him where Vera Constantinovna was.

"Madame is in the dining room. The lunch is waiting for you, sir. Mr. Oblenissimoff is there," answered the servant.

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\* Died in 1598.

† 1613.

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Oblenissimoff was the husband of Sablin's aunt. He was a large, talkative man, a worker of the "Zemstvo," extremely unbalanced in his ideas, idealising the moujiks and the people at times, and cursing them at others. He usually left for Nice and for Monte Carlo after his moments of disillusionment to heal the wounds that had been inflicted on his feelings. He was a gentleman, a Russian "barin" in the full meaning of the word, tall, stout, with grey hair and carefully trimmed beard framing a handsome florid face. His fingers were covered with rings and his clothes were always of the latest fashionable cut. Oblenissimoff knew how to tie his cravat with taste and to wear a flower in his button-hole so that it would have a political meaning. Lately he had devoted much time to politics and had composed letters and petitions to the Tsar and the Ministers.

Sablin entered the dining room.

### XXV

"Ах! at last!" exclaimed Oblenissimoff rising to meet him and claspng him in his arms. A red carnation adorned his button-hole. "We had almost decided not to wait for you. I congratulate you, Sasha, ah! the spring has come and a new era of life is beginning. The Tsar has gone with the people. The people have received the power and the law out of his hands. The spring, Sasha!"

"Why are you so glad, uncle?" said Sablin, freeing himself from his embrace and coming up to his wife.

"That is what I have told Egor Ivanovitch," said Vera Constantinovna, "his joy is precocious."

"Liberty!" exclaimed Oblenissimoff. "I am filled with joy. At last we are going to become a real part of Europe. We shall no longer have the nagaikas, knouts and prisons, but liberty as a method of government. The people will elect their representatives and they will fill the chambers of the Duma."

"Whom shall our people elect? What do our people desire?—land and freedom. The same free distribution of land that they have been demanding since the reign of Catherine the Great and which Pugatcheff gave them during the mutiny he raised.

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Do you want a similar mutiny to be repeated, do you want the 'illumination' of landowners' manor houses and the destruction of cultured life? . . ."

"Let all that be. A great work of construction cannot pass without excesses. The people are not so wild and stupid as you think, Sasha, and then they have leaders."

"Who are these leaders? Village teachers—socialists. Have you read their motto: 'Proletarians of all countries unite,' do you know what our modern proletarian is like? Maxim Gorky has given us their beautiful images in all their primæval simplicity. Shall the Makar Choudras of Gorky be at the head of the Government? You must understand that Russia is being set aside. Proletarians of all countries, worthless fellows who have been unable to create even their own personal welfare are going to be invited to participate in the construction of Russia's welfare. Men who are destroying and who despise everything are invited to create the power of a country. Oh, Great God! . . . No good will come out of such a beginning!"

"But who told you, Sasha, that hooligans and raggamuffins will have a place in our parliament?"

"The proletarians will be there," Sablin answered.

"No, the parties! Life and the struggle of parties shall reign there. Yesterday I was at a meeting of our young Constitutional Democratic party. Roditcheff and Muromtzeff,\* delivered speeches. What brains these men have! They clearly and brightly described Russia's happy future. The Tsar has placed Russia's destiny in the hands of the Russian people and they will be able to preserve the integrity of all that once belonged to the Romanoffs alone."

"Proletarians of all countries, that means Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Georgians and our own yellow beaked youths who have been expelled for misconduct from schools—these are the ones whom your people are calling to power!"

"Sasha! Sasha! Shame! Professors with great names,

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\* A Moscow lawyer, President of the first Duma convoked at Petersburg on the 27th April 1905,

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

famous scholars in law and in political science! Muromtzeff, a patriarch with a huge grey beard, authors of scientific researches, men of knowledge and of light!"

"I have not read their works."

"You ought to be ashamed then. You have mediæval ideas about things, Sasha. Knights, town folks and peasants. The knights spend their time in hunting and in revelry, the town folk work for them, and the peasants till the ground for them. It is absurd!"

"And beautiful," added Sablin.

"No, beauty lies in general work."

"The knight should till the ground and the peasants burn their castles and cut to pieces paintings of Vandyke and Teniers—eh?"

"It is a pity you didn't hear Muromtzeff's speech."

These men have been in prisons and in exile. They know the people and will be able to manage them."

"Criminals."

"No, sufferers for the truth, for the people."

Sablin shrugged his shoulders. At that moment Count and Countess Paltoff arrived. Natalia Borisovna greeted Vera Constantinovna and rushed towards Sablin and Oblenissimoff.

"Egor Ivanovitch, what does all this mean? Alexander Nicolaievitch, explain it to me, I don't understand it at all. Can it mean 'égalité, liberté, fraternité.' Will our estate be taken away from us? Am I no longer a Countess?"

"A citizen. . . . Natalia Borisovna," said Oblenissimoff,—  
"is the word 'citizen' worse than 'Countess?' The great ideals of the French revolution. . . ."

"With the Russian people," put in Sablin.

"Murder of the King, the Terror, Robespierre, Marat, Danton . . ." said Vera Constantinovna.

"I have already seen one fellow of that type today. He sat on a lamp post and exorted the crowd to storm the Petropavlovsky fortress and to liberate the criminals who are imprisoned there. The police had to pull him down by the feet while he



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howled 'liberty!' The police gave full liberty to their nagaikas while thrashing him," said Paltoff.

"Count! You are incorrigible! No, gentlemen, you do not understand the great act of Imperial clemency. You are bad servants of the Tsar."

"What else could one do?" said Sablin with feeling. "Can people be allowed to instigate the liberation of criminals? The Emperor signed the edict against his will. He did not want it but he was forced to."

"What can one do!" roared Oblenissimoff. "One must go to the streets and the squares of the city and preach the words of the Tsar and his sacred will. Yes, one should disband the army, beat the swords into ploughshares, give the land to the men who toil on it and go to the Tsar arm-in-arm with workmen and peasants and call him to follow you into the heart of the holy Russian people, into quiet, orthodox Russia. Liberty! Spring! I cannot stay indoors when everything speaks of spring. I will go into the streets and listen to what is being said there, I will go to the party meeting and rejoice at the great men who are coming to the front. A great day! As if it were Easter! I feel like singing 'Christ is risen!'"

Oblenissimoff shook hands with everyone and left.

"Is he mad, your uncle?" Count Paltoff asked.

"No, he sold all his estates at a very high price two months ago and has transferred the money to Switzerland. He can rejoice now."

"Queer man," said Natalia Borisovna. "Wears a red carnation in his button-hole and shouts like a workman."

"Terrible times are approaching. My father wrote to me from his estate that the Esthonians were getting quite out of hand there. They burnt down some young forest plantations last week. The damage is estimated at over five thousand. Some paid the rent for this year, but others didn't."

"A policeman was killed near our estate," said Paltoff. "Father called out the Cossacks, as by a lucky chance he was on friendly terms with the Governor. But the whole manor of our neighbours was burnt down and no one could be pun-

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ished. They declared that the whole village had decided to do it."

"Have you heard who these Muromtzeffs and Roditcheffs are?" asked Sablin.

"No, Sasha, I haven't. They must be scholars or writers."

"Writers?" Sablin said meditatively. I would understand it if they had such names of world renown as Leo Tolstoi, Mendeleieff, but these. . . ."

"They possess something more important," Natalia Borisovna remarked bitingly.

"What is it?" asked Sablin.

"They have been in prison."

Sablin shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. The general silence became depressing. The feelings of each varied but all were gloomy.

## XXVI

YEARS passed. Nothing was changed, as Sablin wanted to think. The Emperor still held the title of Autocrat and emphasized wherever he could that he was an Autocrat. The first Duma had been dissolved after it had begun to speak too freely. It assembled again at Viborg and was arrested. The people answered by bloody riots, pogroms and "illuminations" of the estates,—the troops quelled the riots. Capital punishment, which had not been heard of for a long time, now became an ordinary event. Incendiaries, murderers and propagandists were hung and shot everywhere. Sablin thought that they deserved what they got for having acted against the law, but the people blamed the Government . . . and the Emperor . . . for everything. The words "the hated Government" became of common use.

Some glorified the Duma, called it "the Duma of National Wrath," and predicted a great future for it; others only laughed at it and called it a "place for talking." Sablin once talked with Pestretzoff on this topic.

"The Emperor makes a great mistake by his present policy," Pestretzoff said. "Either the Duma is a Parliament which

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rules the country, before which the responsible Ministers tremble and which performs the functions of the Emperor's eyes, or no Duma is needed at all and only 'We, by the will of God . . .' should remain."

"I think that we have both," remarked Sablin. "As far as I know the Emperor does not want to give up autocracy."

"Then no Duma is needed, Sasha."

"Why, let them talk. It amuses the people. I have heard some speeches at the Duma and have read all the reports of the sittings. They are all devoid of real activity. The parties quarrel and fight each other. The Ministers pay no attention to what is going on there and the Emperor still less. . . ."

"You are wrong, Sasha. The Duma in its present state represents a terrible evil. The people create nothing through their representatives but only criticise. That is easy. The Duma fits out men who are capable only of talking and criticising while the country will soon require men capable of creative work. Sasha, the disturbances do not cease. The troops are becoming unreliable and the discipline is weakened. It is the work of the Duma! The Duma undermines the State, it corrupts the people. By its criticism, founded or unfounded,—that does not matter, as the point of the question lies elsewhere,—the Duma instills in the people distrust and contempt towards the Ministers. The Duma brings forth and shows to the people all the dark sides of the Government and of the Tsar. The Duma has arisen between the Tsar and the people. It ignores the good actions of the Tsar and emphasises the bad. Sasha, you often see the Emperor and you speak with him freely,—tell him that things cannot remain as they are. The Duma should be made responsible, it should be invited to participate in government and not in criticism. Its powers should be enlarged and not curtailed. The entire responsibility for everything should be placed on the Duma. The Tsar should remain only a Tsar. . . . The only other issue would be for him to take everything upon himself, to break with the noble classes, to go with the people and personally make them a gift of the land."

Sablin watched the Emperor. A great change was noticeable

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in him. He became moody and irritable. Sometimes he drank vodka before dinner and supper as if trying to forget something and to dispel gloomy thoughts. He did not become drunk, his eyes did not shine, but were simply fixed with deep sadness in them upon something that he saw in the distance. Sablin's feelings of love for the Emperor remained unaltered. He wanted to penetrate into the reason of the Emperor's sadness but he did not know how to do it. The Emperor's position was becoming extremely difficult because the Ministers placed all the responsibility upon his shoulders. Military executions, capital punishment and proclamations of a state of siege were done in the Emperor's name. Clemencies and favours were given by the Duma which obtained them from the Emperor by arrogant speeches. It always asked for more than was needed and when the laws were issued the impression was created that the Tsar had cut down the rights of the people,—that the Tsar had given one thing when the Duma had asked for another. The Tsar saw and understood that the men whom he had appointed to help him, on whom he had showered favours and distinctions now transformed him into an object of a political game. These men were betraying him.

The Emperor's family life was also worrying him. The Empress was ill and often did not appear at the table for meals. New persons surrounded her and they had pressed Sablin aside. The Empress had given up her dreams of power and lived only for her family and her son, but she had strange mystical ideas and acquaintances. Anna Viroubova, the abnormal wife of an abnormal husband became her intimate friend. They prayed together, together they reached ecstasy and searched for new saints and for signs of the will of God. The Empress stayed for hours on her knees, and bruises covered her skin. Happy people did not pray thus. She was unhappy.

Sablin suffered greatly in seeing the sorrow that reigned in the Imperial family. Often he had opportunities for watching the Emperor and the Ministers when on duty at the palace. Rodzianko, the tall stout President of the Duma also came there often. And all of them felt contempt for the Emperor. They

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laid reports before him, they tried to persuade him to do certain things; but their general attitude was unfriendly. They placed their own personalities higher than that of the Emperor. The Emperor felt this. He grew tired of this strife which worried him and made him slack in his work. He preferred to receive only those persons who would bring him good news. He liked Suhomlinoff\* because the clever old General spoke calmly and simply and always presented his reports from an agreeable point of view. He disliked Rodzianko because the President of the Duma always argued and pressed his points, contradicting the Emperor.

The old merry spirit had disappeared from the Court. The palace balls were no longer held after the Japanese war. The brilliant parades of the Guards which usually happened on the "Field of Mars" in April seemed out of place now. The crowds were incited against the Army and excesses were to be feared. The Tsar reviewed his Guards by regiments before the Tsarskoie Selo palace on the days of the regimental holidays. He dined in the circle of officers trying to forget the reality and to create an illusion of fidelity among the troops. He tried to forget the troubles that had arisen in 1905 in his own Preobrajensky regiment.

Sablin saw that the country was falling to pieces after the institution of the Duma. Not Russian people but parties composed it. The Army was separated from the people and the people hated the Army. The Ministers went neither with the Duma nor with the Tsar. The Tsar was left in solitude.

Piece after piece was being torn away from Sablin's heart. His faith in the people had been destroyed,—because Sablin could not believe in a people whose representatives went against Russia and the Tsar, his faith in the Army had wavered, and only the Tsar remained. The beloved Tsar whom he pitied! But one cannot pity a god. The Tsar was losing his divine aspect and that was terrible!

Sablin spent more and more time in the circle of his family.

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\* War Minister during the years which preceded the Great War.



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His children were growing up; Vera Constantinovna was unchangingly beautiful and loved him as she did before. She was admitted to the intimate circle of the Empress, she tried to sooth her sufferings and Sablin loved her all the more for that. "I have something to live for yet," he thought,—“the Tsar and the family. . . .”

“Let the insane Victor grow up there in the distance. I shall go against my son should he rise against the Tsar. Is he my son after all? I haven't brought him up. The heart which gives the soul is more important than the seed out of which the body arises.”

## XXVII

SABLIN was alone in his flat on a spring evening. His son was at the Cadet Corps, Tania at her school. Vera Constantinovna had left for Tsarskoie Selo in the morning and had not yet returned. The clatter of hoofs and the rumble of wheels on the street pavements freed from the snow and ice came from outside. Oblenissimoff, who was a member of the fourth Duma, was very proud of the fact and often delivered smooth speeches full of liberalism but entirely devoid of common sense, had come to see his nephew, and talked at length.

Now Oblenissimoff was gone. Dead silence filled the flat, only overhead some solitary person poured out his soul in a nocturne. It spoke of a tortured self seeking rest in melody and in prayer. Sablin's gaze wandered in his thoughts over the whole of the country. He saw the little smoky houses of the peasants, the land of different owners scattered in strips between the possessions of others, dirt and dejection, hunger and poverty. He saw the Volga steppes scorched by the sun and heard prayers for rain; he saw the white clean houses of the Ukrainians. The same shout rose in a groan everywhere —land!

Sablin knew that it was not only the land that the Russian people needed. It was necessary to alter the present system by which each peasant had his land scattered in small strips over a vast area; proper irrigation had to be introduced in many places; culture and education were necessary; but first of all they needed

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land. The Russian mujiks sought for truth and did not see it in the present state of things when one man groaned on half a desiatin of land while another possessed a whole province and never visited it. The people had always hoped for a redistribution of the land. They had hoped for it even before the liberation of the serfs. It was the Tsar who had to give them the land and not the Duma or the revolution, not strikes, murderers of officials and the burning of manor-houses. The Tsar ought to leave the educated classes and go with the people.

But all these lands had been granted to the nobles as gifts for true service by the previous Emperors. Each estate had been presented together with "gramotas" signed by the Tsars of Moscow and the Emperors of all The Russias. Could the Tsar, the grandson and descendant of these Tsars, break their word and signature and take away the land from the nobles when they had committed no fault?

No, he could never do it!

The nocturne flowed quietly overhead, trickling fainter and fainter till it suddenly poured out mighty and ringing again, the music speaking of power and calling to battle and to great deeds.

The nobles should love the Emperor, they should support him at a time when the Throne was shaking. The Russian State had always based itself upon the nobles and they should support it now. All these millionaires, proprietors of tens of thousand of acres of land, should come to the Emperor and tell him: "Take our lands and use them as you think best!" Villages and stanitzas would thus receive the additional land they needed by an Imperial edict and by the will of the Tsar. Experimental farms and schools of agriculture would be instituted in the manor-houses. The young men of noble families would live and work there and would teach the peasants patriotism and scientific agriculture instead of socialism and hatred for the Tsar and for Russia as the present generation of the educated classes was doing, which instigated murders and pogroms. Let the old coat of arms,—a golden sword on a blue field,—stay over the doors of the manor-house of the Sablins and an inscription be placed beneath: "The Imperial School of Agricul-

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ture founded by the Sablins." Let Kolia and Tania live there surrounded by a crowd of peasant children and teach them how to make Russia prosperous and happy! . . .

Would the nobles refuse if the Emperor addressed them with a request to renounce their hereditary rights to the land and to go thus with the peasants?

The pianist struck a mighty chord and abruptly ceased playing the nocturne, which had risen to the power of a storm, and started again in a sweet weeping melody which spoke of sorrow and of prayer.

Old Russia had been composed of the Tsar, the nobles, the merchants, the clergy, professional classes, peasants and officials.

The "bourgeois" and "proletarians" had appeared now. Peasants and workmen still remained while all the rest were divided into parties: Monarchists, October Party, Nationalists, Constitutionalists, Socialists-democrats, Socialists-revolutionaries, Labour Party, Anarchists, Internationalists, Communists, —perhaps there were even more!

The old classes had worked for Russia and the Tsar. Strife had sometimes arisen between them, but they were all unanimous when the matter touched Russia, and Russia had then been strong and invincible. But now the noble class was in decay. The nobles had helped to form all these new parties and took an active part in their work. Little by little they had taken the form of the horrible, unpatriotic and superficially educated "intelligentsia," who were now ruining Russia in their party strife, Russia could not exist with them. Such nobles were no longer needed, let them perish and give their land to the people.

The clergy was in poverty, had lost its active spirit and faith and had no influence on the people. All its interests were concentrated upon petty fighting for existence and bread. A clergy without spirit is no longer a clergy. It was necessary to make radical changes in the organisation and personnel of the clergy and to make each priest materially independent of his congregation. Two types of priests were possible—either a well-fed man whose material needs were supplied, a man of the type of Catholic or Protestant priests, a man who could help his con-

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gregation by vast scientific and practical knowledge which he had acquired through proper training, or,—a hermit, an aged man who needed nothing. But not the present type of priest, who had to be paid for each office and who refused to perform the wedding or funeral ceremonies without payment. Yes,—the real clergy existed no longer.

Sablin's head sank lower and lower. Where could the Tsar find support? Two of the main pillars were in decay and might collapse at any moment and fall into dust. Independent workmen had been replaced by employers and employees. A powerful army of famishing, discontented men had been created inside the State. Perhaps it would have been better for Russia if the whole of this army had been disbanded and sent back to their native villages, if the factories had been replaced by manual work and articles of luxury imported from abroad.

The peasants and the officials remained. It was evident that the peasants would follow those and work for those who would give them the land. They had become accustomed to the Tsar, they praised him in their songs and their legends.

The officials. . . .

Sablin sighed heavily. "Mea culpa," he whispered, "mea maxima culpa." Devotion to precedence and selfish ambition had always been a characteristic feature of the officials, but they had never attained such proportions as now. The officials were corrupt to the limit. Stolipin alone had risen high above the rest and had perished, murdered by an unknown hand. The "oprichniki" of Ivan the Terrible, the Secret Office and the renowned Third Section in later days had done much injustice and settled many personal quarrels, but they had been careful to guard the prestige of the Tsars. The present "Ochрана" and the swarm of officials which surrounded the Throne thought little about the Tsar's interests. Old Russia was in a state of decay. It was necessary to construct new pillars which would support the magnificent building of the Russian Empire. Wide reforms had to be introduced without delay. The Duma could not and should not give them—it was itself corrupt, being composed of parties and not of Russian people, and could have no

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authority over them. The Tsar should give these reforms. The Tsar should issue edict after edict, ukaze after ukaze, alter everything, till the Russian field in a new manner, find the necessary men and place them in power. The Tsar! Everything should come from the Tsar and be done in his name!

The music ceased overhead in a powerful flowing chord. Sablin rose and looked at his watch. It was four o'clock in the morning.

"I will go to the Tsar," he thought. "I will go and tell him everything. It is my duty! He will listen to me and will understand that what I say is prompted by my limitless love for him!"

### XXVIII

THE Emperor had only finished his work at six o'clock and passed to his study. "Wait just a moment, Your Honour," said a stout respectable looking valet de chambre of His Majesty. "I will announce you."

Sometimes the Emperor invited Sablin in these evening hours and talked to him. Sometimes his daughters, the Grand Duchesses, joined them and the Emperor read to them in English. Everything was quiet then in the study of the Tsarskoie Selo palace. Worries and earthly cares vanished, the Emperor's eyes had not such a sad look as usual, and he became more accessible for simple conversation.

Sablin remained alone in the library. The walls were lined by large bookcases with glass doors, and a round table littered with newspapers and illustrated magazines stood in the centre of the room. The "Novoie Vremia" and "Russky Invalid," printed on vellum paper were put on one side. The Emperor read them in the morning.

A mahogany door with a bronze handle led to the Emperor's study. Everything was quiet there. Sablin had already been standing motionless near the table for more than half an hour. A bronze clock which was before him had struck six and then half past.

The doors leading to the presence chamber were suddenly



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thrown open and the Adjutant General on duty preceded by the valet de chambre entered the library. A man of strange appearance followed them. He was tall, thin, had black hair trimmed in moujik fashion, a black moustache and a long shining black beard which descended in waves from his extremely pale face. He wore a long white silk shirt embroidered on the collar and borders, long dark velvet trousers and soft peasant "oporki" which made his steps noiseless. But the eyes of the man were his most remarkable feature. Huge, almost entirely white, shaded by black eyelashes and thick eyebrows, they shone with an internal fire from under dark sunken eyelids. Sablin involuntarily lowered his gaze under the sharp and attentive look of this man which seemed to penetrate into his soul and to read all that was there and in his thoughts.

Had that man entered alone without the Adjutant General, Sablin would have stopped him and called out the Guard, so unusual and out of place was his appearance in the surroundings of the palace.

The Adjutant General seemed confused on finding Sablin in the library. Sablin stood at attention looking at the Adjutant General, but the strange man stopped before him and pierced him by the gaze of his uncanny eyes.

"Don't look at him but at me, my dear. Great profit it shall bring you. Lean upon me."

Sablin involuntarily looked at the speaker. His face was separated into two parts by a long, strikingly white nose. His black beard and dark hair glistened brightly and the great horrible eyes gazed keenly from under thick eyebrows. They seemed to see what no one else saw, but no thought was reflected in them. There was something demoniacal in the lustful but powerful gaze.

"You think of great things! O-ho! I shall cut it over again at my will. Bow low to Grisha. . . . He can teach you. . . . Get me to meet your young wife, that'll be better still. . . . Ough, she's good! . . . I like. . . . Whi—i—te! . . ."

And he turned away from Sablin, sniffed, a lustful smile appearing on his thick bright red lips and walked towards the

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door which was opened for him by the valet de chambre. He boldly entered the Emperor's study.

The Adjutant General silently shook hands with Sablin and left the library.

"Who was this?" Sablin asked.

A smile of contempt flickered over the face of the valet de chambre—at least Sablin thought so—but it immediately resumed its usual calm and impassionate expression.

"Grigory Efimovitch Rasputin. The lighter of the Tsar's ikon lamps," he said. "There will be no further reception to-day. His Imperial Majesty is occupied. It is useless for Your Honour to wait. I could report if there is anything that you wish me to."

The passionate speech he had prepared vanished from Sablin's head. The pale face with the long black beard was haunting him, the white eyes burnt him through and through and the lustful strange words rang in his ears.

Sablin shrugged his shoulders and walked out of the library. A painful foreboding of something inevitable and horrible swept over his soul and for the first time his love for the Tsar was seriously strained.

## XXIX

THE Emperor reviewed at Tsarskoie Selo the units of his Guard on their regimental holidays and received the officers at his table. An insolent idea came to one of the regiments which was most favoured by the Tsar. The officers decided to invite the Emperor to their regimental Mess and return his hospitality by showing him what the etiquette ordinarily prevented him from seeing and hearing—the Tziganes, a gay Russian choir from the Krestovsky island, Goulesko's Roumanian orchestra and singers and dancers from the "Villa Rode." They wanted to take him away for a moment from the usual stiff surroundings of the palace, Imperial hunts, parades, manœuvres, balls and receptions and bring him into the intimacy of an officers' merry making. Only their own intimate circle would be present, all officers of the regiment which the Emperor liked and every one

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of whom he knew personally. The idea was a bold one. . . . But it was proposed during the days when the Emperor was growing weary of his power and when he sought momentary oblivion of his palace and family life, which were becoming more and more difficult. And the Emperor accepted the invitation.

Another regiment followed the example of the first. It was impossible for the Emperor to refuse now and it became a custom for the regiments to receive the Emperor at their Mess. These receptions cost fabulous sums of money. The year's salary of a junior officer went in one day. For many officers of the more modest regiments such a reception meant a family tragedy, the impossibility of purchasing new clothing for their wives, tears and groans. But no one could complain or protest. The Tsar's clemency was too great and too great was the honour of having the Tsar as their guest. But little by little the god descended from the clouds and men saw no longer a god but an ordinary mortal. The spirit of criticism had penetrated deep into Russian society and men began criticising the Emperor when they saw him in their own midst.

But no one could tell that to the Tsar. He saw sincere merriment, he forgot his worries among the young officers of the regiment and rested there from his heavy moral sufferings. But the god ceased to be a god, and gossip and calumnies which men whispered around and which could not reach the palace, now easily penetrated the barracks.

Sablin's regiment was waiting for the Emperor. He was expected at seven o'clock for supper at the Mess.

Soldiers in parade uniforms lined the staircase, which was covered by a red carpet and decorated by evergreens. Police and agents of the "Ochрана" patrolled the street outside.

Curtains were drawn in the Mess which was brightly illuminated inside. The table for the "zakouskas" was covered with heavy dishes of ham and sturgeon and with crystal vases with fresh caviar. The officers were lined up according to rank in the large hall. The band was placed in the adjoining billiard room. The officer on duty waited downstairs. Exactly at seven

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

o'clock the Emperor's large motor car, which was driven by an officer devoted to him, was sighted at the end of the street. The motor car stopped before the Mess around which a crowd of onlookers had assembled. They took off their caps and hats and raised a thin and disorderly cheer. The Emperor went up to the Mess where he shook hands with all the officers while the regimental march rang through the hall. The Emperor passed round among the officers, stopped near a window and lit a cigarette. The men of the band had finished playing and crowded curiously at the doors. For the first time they saw the Emperor not from the ranks but in the familiar surroundings of the Mess. Everything was quiet in the hall. The officers felt restraint in the Emperor's presence and the Emperor did not seem to be quite at ease. He silently looked at them with his shining kind eyes. Sablin broke the ice by approaching the Emperor and beginning to talk to him simply. The Emperor smiled and said:

"Smoke, Sablin. . . . Smoke, gentlemen. . . ."

Sablin lit a thin cigarette and smilingly began to speak about his visit to the camp barracks in the winter and of an old watchman who was guarding them.\*

The Emperor looked at him and smiled, but the smile immediately vanished from his face and his eyes took on the sad expression which they wore constantly during the few past years. The Commander of the regiment approached them and invited them to proceed to the dining hall.

At the table the Commander of the regiment sat on the Emperor's right hand; the Prince Repnin on the left. Steepochka, Gritzenko and Sablin opposite. The Emperor seemed to be in a melancholy mood. Absentmindedly he drank a glass of rarest madeira and listened not so much to what the Commander of the regiment said as to the general hum of voices round the table and to the music of the band. The Mexican song "La Paloma" was being played, and all watched the Emperor, as it was said to be one of his favourites. The courses were served

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\* The camps were occupied by the troops only in the summer.

## TO RED FLAG

quickly and skilfully. Waiters from the best Petersburg restaurant had been called in to help the Mess orderlies. A stout maitre d'hotel, clean shaven and important looking, directed the operations. Wine was drunk in moderation. But the lieutenants led by Rotbek managed to become flushed and noisy when the moment for the toasts arrived. The toasts were official and short:

"To the Sovereign Leader of the Russian Army!" the toast was drowned by a wild hurrah and the National Anthem repeated thrice. The second: "To the regiment and officers of the regiment!" was lost in the tune of the march.

After supper all passed into a small cosy drawing room where coffee was served. The Emperor did not sit down, and called Sablin to his side.

"How is your wife?" he asked. "I haven't seen her for a long time but I know that she often visits the Empress."

His face grew sad. The Emperor was silent for a moment and then said:

"Everything is so wearisome, Sablin. 'La Paloma' was played during supper. About twenty years ago I made the mistake of saying in my hussar regiment that I liked this song and 'La Paloma' has ever since met me wherever I arrived. . . . Sometimes I think of Hamlet's words about the cloud. . . . Do you remember them?"

He approached the table, put down his cup and addressed the Commander of the regiment:

"Have you finished forming the machine gun section?"

"Quite. We are going to begin the shooting exercises at the camp."

"Long ago I considered it necessary to supply the cavalry with machine guns, but the budget caused so much trouble. I quite understand that it is annoying to appropriate money for war purposes."

"Your Majesty," said Gritzenko approaching the Emperor, "may I venture to invite you to listen to our new repertoire in the hall."

"Here is a man who does not seem to grow old," the Em-



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peror said, taking Gritzenko's elbow,—“you are of the same age as myself, I believe?”

“Two years older, Your Majesty.”

“And how smart you look!”

“No, really, Your Majesty, I have lost all my hair. My head is like that of a catholic priest.”

All passed to the hall. A stage had been erected there and arm chairs and sofas were placed before it in picturesque disorder. The Emperor sat down in an arm chair.

A Russian “chansonette” singer fluttered out on the stage. She had bare legs with little shoes and a short ballet skirt. Her extremely low cut dress uncovered her breast. She began to sing new suggestive little songs that were in fashion at that time.

The Emperor listened smiling. Seated behind him the lieutenants were laughing and Rotbek winked at the singer.

The bandsmen and soldiers crowded at the doors.

Sablin rose and went sadly away from the hall. It seemed to him that here, in their very regiment, the Imperial dignity was being offended.

## XXX

THE bandsmen were smoking and drinking beer in the billiard room. Bottles and rye bread covered the table. Some of the soldiers sat, others stood. The backs of all were turned to Sablin and evidently none of them expected that an officer would enter at that moment.

“I saw, brothers, how the Emperor lit his cigarette,” said a tall, dark bandsman, who played on the trombone,—“quite simply, quite like an ordinary man. The C.O. told him something and he laughed. Queer! A Tsar, and how simple. I shall tell this at the village when I come home, but will anyone believe me?”

“How he looked at the French girl. I swear, brothers, that her legs were quite bare. What a shame!” said an alto player.

“She ought to be shot for it, the carrion,” said another. “Appears before the Tsar in such a state! Oh, my God, what will

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happen next! Shame! In the village they'll call me a liar and thrash me just for telling about it!"

Sablin retired behind the curtain and listened. His heart was beating, tears rose to his eyes and he felt a desire to weep.

A cornetist, an irascible, choleric and unhealthy looking youth, who had been a pupil at the conservatory, said among the crowd of the bandmen:

"The Tsaritsa passes her time with Gregory Rasputin, well the Tsar has to find consolation. He can have a wide choice."

"Towards what are the officers leading the Tsar? To think of it,—is it good?" said the trombonist.

"Fool!"

"You're another. Are you an N.C.O. to bark as you do?"

"I am an artist and you—boo-boo-boo and nothing more!" the baritone turned again to his neighbour and continued: "I know this Mary-Kate, she's a simple Finnish girl, her temperament alone brings her forward."

"The Emperor seemed to like her," said a bandsman smiling.

"I should think so. Rasputin has made him understand the value of things."

"How did this man get into such power," said the bandsman,—"they say he's a simple moujik?"

"A big . . .", said the baritone, and all laughed gruffly.

Sablin felt a desire to rush into the room and beat this mad crowd with anything he could lay hands upon. With billiard sticks, balls, bottles, only to see blood on their faces and terror in their base eyes. But he restrained himself. Ah! It wasn't their fault that divinity had been shown to their uninitiated gaze. All this was equivalent to propaganda conducted by the officers, by the very men who ought to save and protect the Emperor. Today at their regiment, yesterday at the Sharpshooters, at the Preobrajensky regiment last week and at the Hussars some time before. What could the men understand in all this? They saw corrupt girls with bare legs, they saw the improper tango and cake-walk, they heard the provoking music of the Rumanians, the words of the suggestive songs and saw the Tsar amid these surroundings.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The Tsar—meant a god for them! Could one dance or sing a “chansonette” before an altar?

Sablin remembered a case during the revolution of 1905 when a crowd of youngsters burst into the Kazan cathedral during the service. One of them lit a cigarette from the flame of an ikon lamp while his companions laughed merrily.

Was there not something similar here? In that instance socialists had acted, the enemies of God and of Tsar, and here—we! we!

Horror overwhelmed Sablin, he clasped his head in his hands and left the Mess. Unrestrained laughter and the sounds of a too frolicsome French song sung by three merry voices came from the hall while he was putting on his overcoat downstairs.

A pale spring night was outside. The Emperor's motor car waited near the entrance. A stout officer sat motionless at the wheel, his sad gaze fixed into space. Sablin came up to him and grasped his hand. The officer looked at him and seeing tears in his eyes, rose from his seat, embraced Sablin and kissed him warmly. They understood each other.

### XXXI

REFNIN took over the command of the regiment in the spring, Sablin was promoted to the rank of colonel for Easter, Stepochka received an army regiment, Rotbek was appointed Commander of the second squadron and Matzneff left the service.

Sablin was in charge of the regimental Quartermasters department. “Now is the opportunity for creative work!” he thought, and settled down to calculate what had to be done. He travelled constantly from the camp to Petersburg and back. Vera Constantinovna intended to leave with the children for the country but for some reason postponed the departure. Kolia was at the camp with the Cadet Corps, Tania was finishing her school. She often visited Tsarskoie Selo and became Virobuff's constant guest. Sablin did not like this order of things but he was too busy with his regimental work to interfere. He had to carry on a constant strife with the Commander of the regiment.

In the spring Sablin had received a letter from a Cossack

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Colonel, Pavel Nicolaievitch Karpoff, who commanded a regiment on the Austrian frontier. He had become acquainted with Karpoff during patrol service in the Novgorodsky government in 1905. Karpoff did not belong to Sablin's circle of society and they had never met since. He was of a good old family, possessed a coat of arms but did not serve in the Guards. Their deep love for Russia and for the Emperor had formed their friendship during the patrol service and they exchanged letters from time to time.

"Are you thinking about the war?" Karpoff wrote. "All my thoughts are centred on it. I drill my regiment, prepare it for terrible battles and hope that the shame of the Japanese war won't be repeated. Then—'we did not know,' but we haven't got that excuse now. We do know. Only a blind man can't see that England and Germany will have to fight each other. England will perish if she doesn't destroy Germany now. Here on the frontier I feel the pulsation of military life. Germany doesn't want war for the moment, she let the opportunity slip past her in 1911 when we had no machine guns and heavy artillery and when France had not finished her program of armament. Germany would have managed then. But it is too late now, and we shall conquer. I want war, but at the same time I fear it and all my hopes are concentrated on the Emperor's love for peace. I am worried by the fact that the big men among the local Jews want the war. This means that it will be profitable for them and it cannot be good for Russia if it is profitable for the Jews. You must also prepare yourself, Alexander Nicolaievitch, because the tendencies of public opinion after 1905 are such that the Guards will have to be sent to the front.

"But nothing may happen yet. The contractors Mandeltort and Rabinovitch have visited me this morning to sign a contract. They say that the Jews won't allow the war. Here in Poland we all believe in the almighty power of the Jews, may God pardon us.

"I have sent my son to the military college this spring. He is a good boy, three years the senior of your son, and a diligent

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scholar. Try to see him at the college. He is a handsome fellow and a good Cossack. He will be proud of your attention."

This letter made Sablin think. Yes, distant thunder was already heard, though it was hard to believe in the possibility of a world war. But he reinspected the whole of the Quartermasters and Mobilisation stores. There were no warm caps, no fur overcoats, the horseshoes were not fitted, the baggage train was in disorder and had never even been rolled out from the sheds, as peasant carts had been generally used. The hospital ambulances were of a clumsy old-fashioned pattern. Repnin insisted on using the regimental funds for new parade helmets and cuirasses, Sablin demanded the purchase of hospital ambulances, repairs of the baggage train, orders for fur overcoats and the reinspection of all the mobilisation appliances.

This engendered heated disputes. Sablin consulted contractors, travelled to Finland to order wagons, sent to Kozloff for horses for the baggage train. The joy of creative work gripped him. The black thoughts about the people, the Tsar, the Duma and his son Victor now vanished. He estimated, made calculations, and decided not to desire too much but to do his little work as earnestly and as well as he could.

He had been for three days at his Petersburg flat, which was half closed up for the summer. Vera Constantinovna was seldom at home. He thought she looked queer. Her eyes shone strangely, her laugh was nervous and she was constantly wrapped in an Orenburg shawl, as if she had fever.

"Are you ill, Vera?" he said.

"No, why?" she asked nervously. "Do you notice anything?"

"You seem unwell."

She laughed hysterically.

"I am in the power of a demon, Alexander," she said, put on her coat and left the flat. She returned late in the evening and opened the door of Sablin's study where he was working with the chief clerk.

"Are you busy?" she asked.

Sablin came out to her. Her face was burning.

"Save me . . ." she said. "Pray for me. I cannot pray."



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"Vera, what is the matter with you?"

"Ah! Nothing . . . nothing . . . God may perhaps pardon me."

"Vera, it isn't good for you to go to these meetings. Faith is good, but mysticism isn't faith."

"Forgive me, Alexander, and if you hear anything,—forgive me. I am tired. Will you soon have finished? I will go to bed."

She made the sign of the cross over him and went away.

Sablin went to his wife's bedroom after he finished his work with the chief clerk. Vera Constantinovna was sleeping. Her face was pale and dark shadows surrounded her eyes. She was restless in her sleep, her eyebrows knitted sternly at times and deep sighs escaped from her breast.

### XXXII

LILACS were blossoming and Petersburg was becoming deserted. Very many of its inhabitants had left for the country "datchas." Sablin returned from the camp in the afternoon and had a conference with the contractors until the evening. His wife was not at home when he arrived at his flat at seven o'clock. She had left for Tsarskoie Selo and Sablin went to work in his study. Hours passed, but Vera Constantinovna did not return. At last she arrived about three o'clock at night in a motor car and went straight to her bedroom where she locked herself in. Sablin decided to talk to her seriously. He never for a moment thought that his wife could have fallen in love with someone else and been unfaithful to him, but her behaviour seemed strange. He knocked at the door of the bedroom.

"One moment," Vera Constantinovna said in a dull voice.

He entered.

She was half dressed and was sitting with loose hair before the mirror. She rose as he came in and terrible suffering was reflected in her beautiful blue eyes. Sablin settled down in an arm chair and wanted to make her sit on his knees but she slipped away, put on a dark night gown and began to arrange her hair hurriedly.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"My dear, darling Vera," Sablin began in a kind quiet voice. "I have been noticing for some time already that you have some trouble. Be frank with me. . . . If you love anyone, tell me. . . . That can always happen. We will think over together what can be done. . . ."

"I have always loved you and you alone," Vera Constantinovna said sadly.

"Then what is the matter with you? What demon did you mention?"

Vera Constantinovna started and looked at Sablin with a frightened expression.

"Alexander," she said sadly,—"leave me alone if you can—I suffer, suffer terribly now. . . . Perhaps I shall tell you everything tomorrow."

"All right," said Sablin. "May God help you. Until tomorrow, dear. I will bear anything, if you will only be happy once more."

But the next day she said nothing. She feigned to be animated, said that it had all been nonsense and that she would tell everything should it be necessary. She insisted upon seeing her children and took Tania from her school. Kolia came more frequently on leave from the camp. At times Sablin thought that she was becoming her old self again, but days passed and he could again notice that her eyes were fixed on one spot, that she did not listen to what he said and started when he approached her. She seemed to have her own secret thoughts, her own grief, and was unwilling to share them with him.

It happened on a July evening. Sablin had just returned from the camp when she entered his study and said:

"Alexander, I see that you are also suffering, but you must prepare yourself for the worst. Pray. . . . Pray my dear boy and save our children. . . . Tomorrow you shall know everything. . . ."

She made the sign of the cross over him several times and looked fixedly at him with eyes brimming with tears. She seemed abnormal and nothing could be read in her strange eyes. Her pure clean soul was no longer reflected in them. He rushed

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towards her but she slipped away. "Tomorrow," she said and went to the rooms of the children.

Sablin did not sleep that night. Several times he approached the door of his wife's bedroom and listened. All was quiet there. "She is asleep, probably," he thought. "Sleep, sleep, my darling, and remember that I shall forgive you, whatever it may be." The thought suddenly came to him that perhaps it would be she who would have to forgive him. What if she had learned everything about Lubovin and Marousia? What if Lubovin still sought revenge and had written to her and had enclosed his letters to Marousia? What if she knew everything about Victor! Sablin began to think of words of excuse but could find none. The night passed in feverish anxiety. Vera Constantinovna did not appear at breakfast in the morning and he grew anxious.

"Father, go to see mother," said Tania. "She has been so strange lately. I think that she is ill. Yesterday she made the sign of the cross so long over us, as if she was saying farewell forever. Go to her, she has something on her mind."

Sablin went. He knocked at the bedroom door—there was no answer. He listened—all was quiet inside. The cold of death seemed to come from the door. He tried the handle,—the door was locked. The anxiety of the children increased.

"Father, something must have happened," Tania was repeating persistently,—“mother behaved so queerly yesterday.”

A locksmith was sent for and the heavy doors were opened when he arrived. Vera Constantinovna lay on her bed. She was clad in her best dress, her hair was carefully arranged and her face had a bluish tint.

She was dead. A phial of poison stood on a stand near the bed and a banal note "No one is to be blamed for my death" lay by a large sealed envelope which bore the inscription: "To Alexander, my husband. To be read after my funeral."

This charming, cheerful creature, always happy and well-balanced, had evidently for some time been consciously preparing herself for death. What cold horror must have penetrated

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her soul and frozen it so that she could have decided to take this terrible step?

All three, Sablin and the children, stood a long time silently looking at the rigid features. The weeping of Kolia and Tania brought Sablin out of his state of dumb grief. He kneeled, covered with kisses the dear face, rose and left the room, taking the children with him.

### XXXIII

VERA CONSTANTINOVNA was buried. Her mother took the children with her; and from the cemetery Sablin returned to his empty flat towards seven o'clock in the evening. It was filled with the scent of flowers, fir branches and the peculiar smell of varnished wood, camphor and incense which remains after the funeral preparations. The flat wore its summer aspect. The mirrors and the paintings were wrapped in muslin and the furniture was covered. His steps echoed sadly through the drawing room and the corridor.

Sablin passed to his study. All the paintings and the large portrait of Vera Constantinovna in her wedding dress were also wrapped in covers. Everything was cleared away from his writing table. Sablin had been preparing himself to move to his camp quarters. He took off the muslin from Vera Constantinovna's portrait, lit all the lamps and gazed at it for a long time. She stood before him in her full height as if alive. Her innocent blue eyes looked at him from under dark eyelashes and her lips seemed to say something.

Sablin closed the curtains and settled comfortably in an arm chair so that he could see the portrait. If Vera Constantinovna's ghost had come to him then he would not have been afraid but would have even welcomed her apparition. Only now as he prepared himself to open the envelope with her last letter he realised how deeply and passionately he had loved her with every atom of his spirit. They had lived for seventeen years together, heart to heart, and he had never once had an intrigue or offended her and she had been faithful to him.

"Haven't you, Vera?" he said and looked at the portrait.

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The young face was smiling. The light was reflected from the paint and one could see that it was a portrait and not a living person. Sablin put out all the lamps except a small shaded one on his table. It was better like that. In her white dress she seemed like a mysterious phantom in the gloom of the study. The evening shadows played on her face and it seemed alive.

Sablin nervously tore open the envelope and several small sheets of paper covered by fine hand writing fell out of it. He arranged them in order of their dates and began to read.

"Will you forgive me? I know that you won't, but I hope still. Life is too good, I love you and the children too much and it is hard to leave it. Conceal everything, forget that it has happened and lie, lie for the rest of my days to you and the children so that you should know nothing, I try to do it but I feel that I cannot lie. I thought of telling you all so that you would understand and forgive. But you won't understand and you won't forgive, you will always remember it in your soul. You may not reproach me and never give out your feelings by words, but still I shall always see that you have not forgotten what has been although you have forgiven me. . . . But what have you to forgive me for after all?

"What has taken place? I fear that even now I won't be able to tell everything, to tell what is most important. All of it is too strange and . . . vile.

"Do you believe in demons? I did not before, but I do now. It could have only been a demonical power and nothing else.

"I shall try to tell everything in the order as it happened, but shall I manage it?

". . . *May*. Yesterday A.F.\* told me that he, Rasputin, wanted to make my acquaintance. I answered that I hadn't the slightest desire to see him as too many bad things were said about him and as it wasn't safe for a woman to meet him.

"It isn't true!" A.F. burst out. "He is a saint. A chosen

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\* Alexandra Feodorovna, the Tsaritsa.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

phial full of blessing. You should be happy that he has noticed you."

"I answered nothing and changed the topic of the conversation.

"That evening we played poker at the house of V.\* at Tsarskoie Selo. V. joked at my expense and then said seriously: 'Salvation lies in abasement. You are possessed by the demon of pride, you know. Drive him away by abasing yourself. Princess L. visited the Russian baths with him, washed his feet there and experienced heavenly happiness. The same happened with G. He has chosen you and this means that you are blessed.'

"I called him a corrupt dirty moujik. A.F. did not like this, she said nothing but I could see that she was displeased. V. said: 'You repeat the opinion of the street. One must know in order to judge.'

"I tried to alter the unpleasant impression I had produced and asked A.F. to excuse me. I said that I would meet him but only when many persons were present.

" 'Certainly,' said A.F. and kissed me.

"... *June*. You arrived from the camp in the morning while I was still in bed. What happiness you brought me. You remember? We lunched together. I was full of love for you. You left after lunch and I remained alone thinking of you. A footman arrived with a note from V. She wrote that she would call on me at six and take me to see him. . . .

"Shall I continue to write? It is so difficult . . . I thought I would leave it, but it would be more difficult still to speak. You must know it. You must know that it was not my fault. I loved you more than ever and I thought that nothing could happen.

"O, God! The abomination of it all!

"V. arrived in her carriage. The air was filled with the fragrance of lilacs, and women and children sold bunches of white

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\* Anna Virobuva, one of Rasputin's greatest admirers.

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and blue lilacs in the streets. We arrived at his flat. I heard many women's voices from the hall and this reassured me. I entered calmly after V. We were evidently expected as places were left for us:— next to him for me and at the other end of the table for V.

"Stout old O. was sitting at his other side. A pale lymphatic young girl I did not know sat next. She had large exalted eyes surrounded by blue shadows and she looked at me with hatred. I also saw L., Princess P. with her daughter who has only just finished her school, N. and J.,—all were in evening dresses. In all there were ten ladies and young girls. V. and myself completed the number to twelve. They were all sitting 'round a large table covered by a white cloth and littered with expensive "zakouskas," cakes, sweets, biscuits, fruits, bottles of wine and a samovar. L. was pouring out tea. He sat at the head of the table and did not rise as we came in. His dress was very odd. A long pale lilac shirt, black trousers and slippers put,—as it seemed to me,—on bare feet. His thick shining hair was parted in the middle and his long black beard had a glossy tint. But most remarkable were his eyes. Huge, white, tired but burning at the same time, they seemed to pierce through everything.

"He stretched out to me his large hairy hand and said: 'Come, come, my dove. Whi-i-ite. I like it.'

"The attention of all the ladies was turned upon me and I heard exclamations:

" 'He has noticed her! Lucky woman! He has deemed her worthy! Our father! . . . God's blessing rests upon her!'

"I was confused and sat down. He poured out some wine for me and offered cakes and sweets. I touched nothing.

" 'You think some powder is added to it?' he said. 'I don't do that. Do as you like. Don't eat if you're disdainful. See how the others behave.'

"He broke a piece from a cake on his plate and stretched his arm towards the pale young girl who opened her mouth obediently.

"Maria loves me. Do you want to go to the baths again, Maria? . . . And you are proud! But it'll be all right. I see

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

you love your husband. You have seen him today. But that does not matter, I'm not disdainful. I like you, you resemble Alexandra so. . . .

"The ladies looked at me with envy:

"O. told me:

"'You must be happy, Vera Constantinovna. It is the first time that our father has paid such attention to anyone from the very start. You must be a chosen phial. The blessing rests upon you.'

"I thought they were all mad. I understood nothing and continued to sit not knowing what to do. Then I suddenly felt his that huge white eyes were fixed upon me.

"I have heard it explained by hypnotism. No, I could have resisted that and I did not fall asleep then. I felt everything to the very slightest detail, and in this lies all the horror of what happened.

"It was a demon who overpowered me, and I felt that my will was being taken away from me. I felt dizzy, saw everything through a mist and could hardly hear what was said. He was looking at me fixedly and when I turned my face towards him I saw only his huge eyes which shone with a horrible fire. He was disgusting but at that moment I felt that I would do anything he would order.

"He roughly seized my hand and said: 'Come!'

"I rose and followed him obediently, he led me by the hand. All were looking at me with admiring envious eyes. V. told me: 'You happy woman!'

"We entered the neighbouring small room where stood a rather dirty looking sofa. The door to the dining room was left open. All sat quietly there and seemed to listen to what would happen. I understood nothing.

"Alexander! Is this unfaithfulness? It is a violence like to murder, it is horrible.

"He led me back to the dining room where I was met by a

## TO RED FLAG

chorus of exalted voices. Princess O. kissed my hand, V. did the same. The lymphatic girl was almost fainting.

"‘You are sacred!’ they screamed all around, ‘sacred, pure, happy!’

"He drank wine smiling.

"I don’t remember how I returned home. You were working in the study. I flung myself on my bed and went to sleep after having taken the decision to tell you everything and to demand vengeance.

"I have to keep silent. A.F. believes that A.N.,\* her son, will live and be in good health as long as *he* lives. I know—you will kill him. You will thus kill A.N. and the whole dynasty. This is the belief of A.F.

"I believe it too, because he is a terrible demon.

". . . *July*. I have decided to put an end to my sufferings. You will not forgive me while I live, perhaps you will forgive me when I am dead.

". . . *July*. Live, live at any price. As your servant, your slave, but only to live.

"Go to the monastery and know that you have forgiven.

"The sun shines brightly, nature is full of joy. I went for a drive to the islands. How beautiful the Neva is, the lime trees and the fragrance of their flowers, the fresh breeze, the blue sky. Oh! I want to live, live!

". . . *July*. He calls me. I haven’t the strength to resist.

"I will not go to him, God be my judge.

"Forgive me. . . . Oh, God! How I love you Alexander, our children and life!

"I know that you will not forgive me alive, forgive me at least when I am dead.

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\* Alexei Nicolaievitch, the Tsarevitch.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Christ be with you. Be happy.

"Forgive me"

### XXXIV

THE handwriting of the last sheet was shaky.

Sablin raised his eyes and looked at the portrait of Vera Constantinovna. She seemed to ask: "Have you forgiven?"

"I have," he said. "I have forgiven you, my dear, my poor unfortunate Vera. I have forgiven you."

Yes, when she was dead.

But had she been alive?

For some time Sablin could not collect his thoughts. Such things could be washed away only by blood, and could they be washed away even then? He would, and kill him. He would go and demand justice. But from whom? From the Emperor and the Empress?

Sablin knew that this demon, this uncanny creature, who possessed such strange magnetic power, had entered the life of the Imperial family. It had been impossible to kill him. Many had tried it. A dagger had been stuck into his stomach but he recovered; he had been shot at and his wounds healed; each attempt only seemed to increase his power. He had been sent away from the Court and immediately followed strange unexplainable illnesses of the Tsarevitch, which vanished on his return. The Grand Duchesses hated and feared him, he was hated by the Emperor, but all feared his terrible power. A horrible power had entered the life of the Imperial family and was drawing towards destruction the Romanoffs and with them the whole of Russia.

A Tsarevitch had at last been born but he suffered from a mysterious illness. Medicine was powerless against it. . . . And he, that strange lustful moujik managed to influence it by his uncanny inner power. Whence did it come? He asserted that it came from God.

But how could God be associated with the tragedy of Vera! God and corruption, God and crime! Vera was right! He was a terrible demon who had appeared on the earth. . . . Many



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strange mysterious cases had been known in the past. They had not been explained although history had recorded them. We did not believe them. And now it happened before our eyes and we were silent and trembled.

No, he, Sablin, would not be silent. Unavenged insults would not haunt him for the rest of his life. Lubovin, Korjikoff, who had taken possession of his son, and now this mysterious man!

Once more terrible phantoms began to appear as they had done in the factory office. But they had been distant then. Now the whole flat was speaking of them, reminding of the dead by the mixed smell of camphor, flowers and fir trees.

Everyone has a cross to bear and everyone must bear it. The brilliant Colonel Sablin also has one. His features are unchangingly handsome, his well cared for moustache lies smoothly over his thin lips, not a single grey hair is to be noticed on his head. He remains still young and handsome, like Dorian Grey in the book of Oscar Wilde, while his portrait is growing old and demolished. His soul was growing old and was being torn to pieces.

Little by little he was losing everything in which he believed and that he loved.

He lost his faith in the Russian people and no longer loved them when he had become convinced that among them no strong men of mighty creative powers were to be found. Russia without geniuses, Russia without leaders, appeared to him like a grey and cold desert.

Now by one blow his family and the Tsar had been destroyed in his heart.

How could that be? How could God allow this to happen if He exists?

Sablin raised his eyes to the ikon and thought: "There is no God!" And if there is no God, then there can be no immortality of the soul and as a result of this no punishment. If there is no punishment then there is no crime. The enemies of Christianity, the servants of the mysterious international, Korjikoff who was corrupting his son,—all of them were right. There

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

was no border between life and death, happiness and misfortune, good and evil. In reality there is nothing in it, it has been invented. Everything came from God, from Christianity, and if there was no God and no Christianity, then the interests of the body should replace those of the soul. Good is that which pleases the body. It is stupid to worry about anyone's death. Vera Constantinovna is dead; with her have vanished the comfort and calm which she had given,—well, take another then, so that your body shall be pleased. Love is a prejudice, a torment of the conscience,—just nonsense.

He felt cold all over. There was no life if there was no God. Only death, powerful and all absorbing. What was life then? Whence did it come? Whence came the torments of creative work, the creative work itself and the happiness it ultimately brought. Who was right: the professor in the Batoum rose garden or Korjikoff in Switzerland?

God or the devil?

But if there was a devil then there was a God. If there was something dark then there must be something bright. If the dark power was pushing the hand towards suicide, then the bright one would stop this hand.

Oh! But that would never happen! The dark powers have already been influencing you for a long time, and did the bright powers help? They did, he thought. The manœuvres came after the separation from Kitty, the sea trip with Vera Constantinovna after the separation from Marousia and Lubovin's insult. Marousia's death had been obliterated by the beautiful autumn at the "White House," his courting and the company of his bride. There had been moments when death tried to lure him into its dark embrace, but always life, joyful and enchanting, succeeded these moments. The happiness of existence came with it. From whom did it all come?

The soul said that it came from God. God existed, God has saved you and he will do so again.

But cold reason said—coincidence! Only coincidence. But now there would not even be coincidence. Everything had perished and had vanished. Russia stood dirty and befouled

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since the Duma had appeared with its speeches and questions. Only dirt seemed to fill the country. Strikes, demonstrations, executions, murders of policemen and soldiers in the streets. The animal instincts had been aroused in the people and shone in the "illuminations" of the landowner's manors. Everything had fallen into dust and began to break like the decorations of a play in a travelling show. Dust and faded paint, the grey beam work of the theatre and the torn canvas could now be seen through them.

He had hoped that the Tsar would help. But Rasputin had arisen at the Tsar's side. The Tsar ceased to be a Tsar and the soldiers dared to blame him. A slave dominated his master and the legend about the great sovereign in which he had believed all his life vanished.

His family had existed. It seemed to be moulded out of steel. The cold Vera Constantinovna, brought up in a good family and at the best school, straightforward and honest, seemed to think only of her children. But the devil touched her and all her purity and honesty collapsed like a house of cards built up by a child.

He looked at the portrait. The light coming from the window now fell upon it. The night had passed away, it was morning outside and the portrait seemed to say: "It is not true!" She had paid by death for her sin, she had expiated her misfortune by death at the time when she longed to live. Was that not a great deed? But what if all this was a punishment for his sins? What had he done with Kitty, Marousia and others? Had he ever repented?

The night had passed, but Sablin did not go to bed and did not feel weary. A difficult and exciting struggle was going on in him and now he knew for certain where it would bring him. He no longer clutched at life now and did not think that it was possible to continue to live. He had lived quite within himself these three days following the death of Vera Constantinovna. He had not read the newspapers, had stayed at home the whole time, had met no one and had talked to no one.

Day had come long ago, the servant brought in the coffee and

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

did not seem surprised that Sablin was still sitting in the arm chair and that his bed was untouched. The noise of the street came from outside and the rays of the sun penetrated through the curtains.

Sablin had decided on his fate long ago. But the portrait held him back. The smile of youthful happiness frozen on the face surrounded by orange blossoms would not be in harmony with a pool of blood and the shattered skull of a suicide sitting in the arm chair. Sablin still implored God and hoped for a miracle as he had done in the factory's office. He had told himself that there was no God and yet clung to Him. And implored and waited for Him.

"Well," he said, deciding at last and taking a comfortable attitude in the arm chair so that his hand would not waver and the last feeling of the body would be that of cosiness,—“if there is a God, he will give me a sign, he will hold back my hand and will tell me what I have to do now that my life is shattered and nothing is left.

“I will approach the window for the last time, I will fling it open, I will look at the blue sky, at the bright sun and I will read the answer in its rays. If there is a God I shall see. . . .”

He laughed at the idea. “What shall I see? Angels, the face of the Madonna, the all seeing eye in a triangle, the face of Vera Constantinovna? Child! . . . Or is it that I want to live? That I cling to life? That I want a delay?”

“No, I simply want to look at the sun for the last time, I shall never see it again.”

Sablin rose, resolutely walked up to the window, raised the curtain, flung open both halves and leaned on the window sill. He remained frozen in this attitude, so startled was he by what he saw. He listened, looked and suddenly made the sign of the cross in a free gesture. He understood that God existed—the miracle was accomplished.

## XXXV

THE summer sun was brightly illuminating the houses of the street and shone on the glass of the windows. The sky was

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of a pale blue and covered by thin fluffy clouds. A crowd of people stood near the Nevsky. Golden church banners and a portrait of the Emperor in a gilded frame sparkled over it. And suddenly the National Anthem rose in powerful chords, stopped for a moment as if the crowd were adjusting their voices, and then flowed on, beautiful, mighty and Russian, grasping at one's heart. The crowd moved down the street. The Anthem was finished and cheers filled the air. And again rose the singing of the prayer: "God save our people."

God, the Tsar and the people had risen from the dead. They had joined together and went forth sparkling with the gold of the ikons and the portrait of the Sovereign Master, praying and wishing for the victory and glory of the Russian Tsar. Russia had arisen.

What had happened? He seized a newspaper which had been brought in by the servant. The Imperial edict was printed on the first page. Germany had declared war on Russia.

Here it was! Now that had happened for which the nations of Europe had been waiting in horror. War had broken out after thirty-six years of peace. At that terrible hour of its beginning the Tsar had forgiven the people for all mistakes; the people had forgiven the Tsar for his weakness, indecision and failures. The Hodinsky field, the Japanese war,—all was forgotten, the unsuccessful Dumas, the bad laws which satisfied no one—all was forgiven. Rasputin would be sent away today and tomorrow there would be no parties but only Russia!

God save the Tsar!

Everything personal seemed so trivial and small. Russia arose before him, beautiful, great, mighty and invincible!

"Give victory to our orthodox Emperor Nicolai Alexandrovitch over the foes . . ." the crowd sang the words of the prayer and they appeared in a new deep light which Sablin had not noticed before.

He put on his cap and left the flat.

"Hurrah!"—rose all around as soon as he appeared at the door. "Long live the Army!"

Strong horny hands seized him and raised him up into the



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

air. Dark, tanned faces of workmen looked at him with admiration.

"Long live the Army!"

He now went through the crowd arm-in-arm with a moujik and a student and the air was filled by the singing of the prayer for victory.

The people were with him, the people were ready for anything. Russia was living.

Solemn peals of church bells came from St. Isaacs Cathedral. They boomed smoothly, interrupted by the lighter tones of the small bells and the deep booming of the great one.

The clergy in golden vestments stood on the top of the long steps and waited for the people. The harmonious singing of the church choir came from the church and blended together with the mighty roar of the crowd.

"Save Your people, our Lord," moujiks said who stood near Sablin. "May Christ save and help you, our beloved officers of the Tsar."

There were no divisions into nobles and people, but there was one nation with its Army, Officers and Tsar. There were no "murderers and hangmen" any longer, and the crowd mightily sang "God save the Tsar."

Germany had declared war on Russia and Russia rose before the approaching danger, the demons of destruction vanished and hid in their cellars, and the people, free from all bonds, marched forward majestically solemn, united and powerful, together with their Sovereign anointed by God.

"Reign for our glory! Reign for the terror of our foes! Our Orthodox Tsar!" the solemn praying tones of the National Anthem rose towards the sky and the sky replied by the deep peals of the bells.

Everything now received meaning and importance. The whole of Sablin's life passed in a moment before his mental gaze. He remembered the revelry at Gritzenko's flat and the blow on the face of the orderly,—Kitty, Marousia, the discussion at the house of the Martoffs with the young people who tried to prove that wars had now become impossible and that the

## TO RED FLAG

army was useless, the manoeuvres, the drill,—all had received a new meaning now.

“Long live the Army!” roared the crowd. From the steps a deacon pronounced the blessing of “Many years!”

“To the Christ-loving victorious Army, many years!”

“Hurrah, Hurrah! Long live the Army!”

“Many years! Many years!”

The hour of payment had come.

Could Sablin leave life now because of the dishonour of his wife by Rasputin? Could he shrink now from paying for the love of Kitty, for Marousia's death, for the merry life he had led, for the happiness of wearing the regimental uniform and for all the blessings of this world which had been given to him by the people and the Tsar? Could he leave his post now, when the Tsar's portrait dominated the crowd and when the National Anthem flowed out repeated by thousands of voices: “God save the Tsar!”

Great Russia had risen and had turned to the Tsar in the hour of danger. The block of ice melted in Sablin's heart. He joined his powerful voice to the voices of the crowd and sang with full faith, and understanding of his responsibility and duty to his country: “God save the Tsar!”



### PART III





## I

KORJIKOFF had provided Lubovin with a second class ticket as far as Verjbolovo, a passport, and a document certifying that he was a workman going on a special mission on behalf of the steel-works to buy certain steel drills in Berlin. He sat huddled up in a corner of the compartment, his head concealed by his overcoat, which hung on a hook, and tried to sleep, but unsuccessfully. He pictured to himself Sablin lying dead and Marousia dishevelled and half-clad. His conscience smote him. "Had he acted as he ought to have?" he thought. "Even Fedor Fedorovitch did not seem to approve my action. I played the part of a bourgeois and not of a proletarian. After all, the lass had only gone in for a love-affair. Korjikoff, for instance, takes a much higher view of the matter. 'I'll marry her,' he says. Evidently I am under the influence of bourgeois moral. Where on earth have I got that from? Probably from father, who always wished to live as the upper class does. What is Marousia going to do now? Had she sufficient presence of mind to leave the house straight away? They are sure to find her. They'll accuse her and drag her to the coroner and from one court to the other. What a shame for the poor girl. What a scandal. What a blow for father!"

He shuddered when the door opened and hastened to cover his head with the folds of his overcoat, looking through the slits to ascertain whether they had not come to fetch him. "They'll call Lubovin," he thought,—“but I am not Lubovin. I'm Stanislaŭ Lestchinsky, a lock-smith on a special mission to Berlin. Consequently—no fear!” It seemed to him at the same time as though someone were on the point of asking: "Is Lubovin here," and was afraid of exclaiming involuntarily: "I'm Lubovin."

"Then we are likely to be late?"

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The custom-house revision took place in a large, light, but cold barrack, with an iron-barred, low partition dividing it lengthways. The sound of luggage being dashed onto the floor and the tinkle of keys and locks filled the place. A lady in a fit of hysterical laughter was being addressed by an official in a black overcoat with green facings:

"It can't be helped, madam, you'll have to strip. You needn't mind, however; we have special female attendants and a separate room for that purpose."

Lubovin, who had no luggage, sat in a corner. Every now and then a big gendarme would appear in the door leading into the passport-office, shouting with a stentorious voice the names of those whose passports had already been viséd.

"General Startzeff."

A small, grey-haired individual in plain clothes rose from the bench next to where Lubovin was sitting and the gendarme instantly ran up to him and delivered him his passport. "Here you are, Your Excellency. Has your luggage been looked at? Is that it? Don't you trouble: it will be brought to your car."

"Lestchinsky!" the gendarme shouted.

"Stanislaff Lestchinsky!"

Lubovin shuddered and hastened towards the gendarme. His knees trembled. He felt as though he were in the presence of Ivan Karpovitch. The gendarme-sergeant was of the same bulky stature, had a ruddy face with a red moustache and stern goggle eyes. The fist in which he held the passport was likewise red and hairy and reminded Lubovin of Ivan Karpovitch's fist and it seemed to him as though he heard the latter's ominous words: "I see right through you to the antipodes, Lubovin."

"Why don't you answer, when you're called," the gendarme exclaimed, sternly but politely, "you keep the other passengers waiting—Stanislaff Lestchinsky, from the Government of Kovno?"

"Yes, proshe panie." \*

"A lock-smith?"

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\* Polish for "Please, Your Honour."

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"Yes, proshe panie."

"Here's your passport. You can continue your journey."

"Dsenkuie panie."\*

Lubovin looked tenderly at the gendarme sergeant. He felt full of gratitude towards him and ready to kiss his red, fat, hairy hand. The sergeant turned away from him.

"Mrs. Tverdokhliebova!" he again shouted and the young lady, who had slept on the upper berth opposite Lubovin, came up to the sergeant.

"Mr. Kepsten Rafalovitch"—the sergeant went on.

Lubovin went to his car.

"If they'd only hurry up," he thought, "once over the frontier I am saved."

## II

ARRIVED on the German border Lubovin bought everything he felt inclined for at the station, had some coffee and for the first time since he left Petersburg felt entirely at his ease. He called everyone "camarade" and seemed happy, smiling foolishly and surprised at the warm weather. He fetched from the lining of his overcoat the papers received from Korjikoff and proceeded to study them.

Everywhere, where he had to change trains, Lubovin visited, at the address given him, the "tovaristch"† member of the revolutionary faction and was provided by the latter with a note forwarding him to the following "tovaristch." Lubovin noticed that all the "tovaristchi," members of the faction, were Jews. They were excessively polite and kind to him, did all they could to help and direct him. An Austrian "tovaristch" accompanied him to the Swiss frontier and saw him into the train bound for Berne. He gave him full particulars as to what station he had to leave the car at and even made drawings of his foot itinerary.

At Reichenbach, Lubovin left the train. Mountains rose at

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\* Polish for "Thanks, Your Honour."

† Russian expression for companion, comrade and pal—which has acquired the meaning of equality and is specially used by the socialists.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

the back of the station. A silver forest of fir-trees, covered with snow, unfolded along a deep valley, here and there turning to right and left, and forming, in the spaces between, islands of snow brightly lit by the sun. The air was still and transparent, and the horizon quite pure, without a vestige of clouds. Though the temperature was low and the breath turned into steam, you hardly felt the cold. Lubovin looked about, lost in admiration. Before him spread the Kiental valley with its lake covered with bright ice, which reflected, like a mirror, a multitude of skaters. Beyond, the mountains formed a dark background and further yet a range of snowy peaks rose majestically. At first Lubovin mistook them for clouds and was amazed when he discovered that they were snow covered mountains. "To think that at home I believed the Duderhoff and Kirchhoff hills to be mountains! Why, they are mere pygmies as compared to these!" The surrounding snow, crossed by narrow tracks left by snowshoes, sledges and bob-sleighs, was white and pure. The trees, on which the morning sun shone gaily and brightly, threw a bluish shadow upon it.

Lubovin had been told that this place was a village and yet two three-storied stone houses, built with taste, stood on either side of the street, which was overhung by an archway of white lacework, formed by the snow-clad branches of huge oak-trees. Flakes of hoar-frost dropped quietly onto the pavement, where they lay shining in the sun.

A low, clumsy church-tower, with clock dials on all four sides and a pillar-gallery supporting a narrow sexagon steeple topped by a cross, protruded half-way into the street. At this point Lubovin, following the instructions of the Austrian "tovaristch," turned to the left, taking a narrow path up-hill. Boisterous children on bob-sleighs were speeding towards him, waving their caps. A peasant-woman came along, whom he stopped to ask his way to Sommerfeld; she shook her head. Then again he saw a black-bearded unfriendly-looking individual, accompanied by a thin, graceful and good-looking young girl with short flaxen hair. Lubovin, despairing of being understood, decided not to

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address himself to them, when suddenly a voice from the thicket exclaimed in Russian:

"Look, tovaristchi, at those goats."

"You've evidently scared them," rejoined the black-bearded man.

Lubovin walked up to him and, raising his hat, said:

"'Tovaristch,' do you happen to hail from Sommerfeld?"

"Quite so," the other answered eyeing him suspiciously from head to foot.

"Do you know 'tovaristch' Varnakoff?"

"What's that to you?" the black-beard rejoined.

The girl stepped aside scrutinizing Lubovin. The man with the black beard, though of short stature, was wide-shouldered and powerfully built. His putty face, with small-pox marks was adorned by a broad nose and a black moustache hanging over his crimson lips. He was clad in a warm wadded jacket, with a knitted woolen cap, which gave his bearded face a comical expression. He wore knee-breeches and long grey knitted putties.

"My name is Lubovin, officially Stanislaſſ Lestchinsky. I've a letter for Varnakoff from 'tovaristch' Fedor Korjikoff."

"Well I'm blessed 'tovaritch.' Such frankness at first sight! Now—how could you!"

Lubovin felt disconcerted.

"Certainly, most imprudent on your part 'tovaristch,'" said the girl. Her voice sounded blunt and pale and matched her thin, pale, pretty face.

"You should first have sniffed about and found out who we are. However you need not feel anxious. This hole is a good hiding-place. Not a soul here, who cares. And now let me introduce myself, Vassilij Varnakoff," said he, stretching his hand.

"Tovaristch Lena Dolgopolova," said the young girl.

Just then a lanky youth with a sickly, pale, clean-shaven face, who happened to be the owner of the voice from the thicket, made his appearance. He was dressed in the same style as Varnakoff.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Who's that?" he inquired.

"A friend of 'tovaristch' Fedor from Petersburg," Lena answered.

"I see; and I am Bedlamoff."

"Well, supposing we went on, 'tovaristch,' " said Varnakoff, as he led the way with Lubovin. "We'll talk matters over."

Bedlamoff followed with Lena.

### III

LUBOVIN had ended his narrative and they all kept silent, puffing at their cigarettes. Some glasses, half-filled with weak, cold tea stood on the table and bits of grey bread lay scattered about. The yellow rays of the setting sun shone through the window, which disclosed a distant panorama continually reflecting changing hues.

"Well, 'tovaristch,' " Varnakoff began,—“so practically you have nothing to do with politics.”

Lubovin kept silent.

"You committed manslaughter," Varnakoff continued, "to avenge your sister's honour. As it happens you very probably thwarted a very important and useful scheme which your sister had in mind in sacrificing herself. However I'd like to know more about you and to get an insight into your political opinions. Lost men like yourself are sometimes useful for our plans. 'Tovaristch' Fedor recommends you to us and we shall therefore do our best to employ you."

Three weeks later Lubovin was in the room they had found for him, talking to Bedlamoff.

"Listen," said Bedlamoff in a low whisper: "The day before yesterday the executive Committee decided to accept you into the faction. There will very likely shortly be a division of our faction into 'mensheviks' and 'bolsheviks.' We have made up our minds to side with the latter. They have a clear notion of things. Your opinions are perhaps more like those of the mensheviks: you still seem to have bourgeois instincts. I have received instructions to take you in hand. Our faction is very powerful. You'll hear its creed from the lips of our leader, but

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you must go with me to our meeting to learn the object of our organisations. We have in view to reconstruct the entire world on new principles. We haven't specially Russia in view, Russia is a detail and we need men everywhere. Once you have joined us and have been initiated in the mysteries of our dogma—you lose your individuality and become a blind weapon in the hands of the faction. And there's no returning again! The leaders, to whom everything is known, can dare anything. Rumour is spread about that our leader is in close contact with the secret Police, to whom he communicates what he deems fit to let the Imperial Police know. It may be. However, we have entire faith in him. The mensheviks are our worst enemies and shrink before nothing. We have begun a fight, far worse, may be, than war itself. We have men at our disposal. Yes. . . . If they receive orders to destroy anyone, they must do it without wavering—if not they perish themselves. You have turned pale, 'tovaristch.' Don't fear—such a task will not fall to your lot. We have studied you. But bear in mind that if you told tales out of school or if, God forbid, you came in too close contact with an undesirable element—you'd be lost—mercilessly lost! We'll watch you work and decide what you are capable of doing. But remember that from this day you must be faithful to us until your dying day. The devotion to the Tsar, which the officers taught you, is nothing compared to what is expected of you by us. Do you understand?"

In fact Lubovin was assigned to various unimportant work and sent on errands. He had to seal propaganda sheets, address envelopes, carry letters to the post-office and sometimes forward them to the neighbouring villages on foot or on a bicycle. He soon noticed that all the members of the faction lived under simulated names. He'd carry a parcel to an addressee with a Russian Christian and family name and would be met by a typical Jew, acquainted with the pass-word. The higher the qualification of the individual, the more luxuriously seemed he to live and the greater was the certitude that he'd turn out to be a Jew and this gave Lubovin food for meditation.

He led a hard, gloomy life, continually under observation and

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

in perpetual dread, and he would certainly have perished had he not been supported by Lena and had not Korjikoff unexpectedly arrived with little Victor—Marousia's son.

### IV

It was a hot summer with intermittent thunder-storms, which cooled the sultry air at night, filling it with the fragrant scent of fresh grass and flowers. The mountains shone like mother-of-pearl, grazing cows looked at Lubovin with their large, inexpressive eyes. Every morning Lubovin, Bedlamoff, Varnakoff and Lena bathed in the lake.

One evening, as Lubovin, home-sick and melancholy, was passing by a huge solitary fir-tree growing in the midst of a field, he heard a voice calling to him from under its branches. When he approached he noticed two bicycles leaning against the trunk of the tree, whilst Lena and a pug-nosed, red-cheeked girl, with sly grey eyes lay reclining under its shade.

"Let me introduce you to 'tovaristch' Elsie, 'tovaristch' Victor," Lena exclaimed.

Elsie, a German from the Baltic, simple-minded and hearty, turned out to be the sister of a communist executed in Russia.

"She's a friend of mine, is Elsie. A nice, single and solitary girl, home-sick like yourself. Try your best to console her," said Lena, looking at Lubovin with kind eyes.

Lena rose and picked up her bicycle which she led to the road. Lubovin silently watched her slender, graceful figure, as she lightly rode down the slope. Meanwhile Elsie looked Lubovin over.

That same evening Lubovin sat with Elsie under that fir-tree, playing the guitar and singing Russian songs and ditties and that very night he visited Elsie in her small attic, which though sultry and stuffy, was clean and neat. In the morning he went home to fetch his things and returned to her attic for good.

Elsie procured him that lazy, unpretentious happiness which suited Lubovin's character. She prepared his coffee, gave him simple but good food, helped him in his work and listened for

## TO RED FLAG

hours, gazing at him with her large forget-me-not eyes and an undisturbed smile, as he sat singing in the evening. She gradually got stout, her voice began to change and her hair grew thin. But she seemed just as attractive to Lubovin's eyes.

He became the laughing-stock of his "tovaristchi" who called him "tovaristch bourjoui" \* and Elsie—"his wife."

This vegetative, dreamy kind of existence was sometimes darkened for Lubovin by the reminiscence of Marousia, whom he now knew to be dead, of their small house on the Schlüsselburg Prospect, since sold by Korjikoff, of Petersburg with its white nights and cold Neva, and he felt a yearning for its northern clime. Then he'd fancy he heard the Cathedral bells ringing, and the clinking of horses' hoofs on the pavement and the tramcar bells. At such moments he looked with hatred at the splendid mountains, with their sparkling glaciers, at the deep blue lake, which with its mirror surface could have been taken for a fragment of sky fallen amidst the green valleys. As soon however as Elsie would appear, feeding the hens, (which formed part of their household, bought on the proceeds of the Petersburg house sold by Korjikoff), Lubovin would calm down again. After all, his fate was sealed: for him, a deserter who had insulted his superior, no return was possible.

Korjikoff and his supposed son Victor lived on the opposite side of the street and through the open window one could see the boy's pretty face and hear him rehearse his lesson. Victor had barely attained the age of four when Korjikoff started teaching him to read. Elsie gave him German lessons.

The sun shone, the valleys alternately changed their aspect, Elsie hummed ditties, they'd play the guitar and the lute and Lubovin sang and time flew on. The golden-red hues of autumn were followed by bright winter snow accompanied by skating and skiing and then again the spring would set in.

In 1905 Bedlamoff, Varnakoff and Lena left for Russia, where there was work to be done; and shortly after it was re-

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\* Russian vulgarism of "bourgeois."

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

ported that Bedlamoff had been executed and that Varnakoff and Lena had been exiled to the Jakoutsk region.

Soon after Korjikoff and Victor left for Naples to join the communist school.

The reports from Russia were vague but events were preparing abroad. Lubovin's errands increased and the whole district swarmed with Jews and Russians. Korjikoff, just back from Naples, looked mysterious and buttoned-up, as though he knew of some event that had to be kept secret. Victor, now a good-looking youth, was arrogant and molested the village girls.

One day Lubovin brought Korjikoff a parcel from the central committee. Neither Fedor Fedorovitch nor Victor were in. The parcel was to be delivered to Korjikoff personally, so Lubovin decided to await his return. It was summer-time. Outside the windows flies were buzzing around lazily and monotonously, the smell of cow-dung came from the yard, and Swiss peasant-girls jabbered gaily in the fields. Lubovin sat at a table by the window, turning over the pages of a note-book in Victor's hand-writing.

On one page he read: "Important, deep and true. To serve as a life-guide."

He put on his spectacles, his eye-sight having weakened with age:

"Man is an animal," he read in the note-book, "an animal with human features enabling him the better to serve the cause and glorious fame of the children of Israel, for it is not meet for the son of a king to be served by animals bearing the image of animals, but by animals with the image of man."

MIDRASH TALPIOT.

"Arise and stand like Israel. He shall be rewarded who succeeds in freeing himself of the enemies of Israel. He shall earn everlasting fame, who will rid himself of them and crush them."

BOGAR.

"To conquer the universe? Fight unceasingly against human society until due order is established and until all the nations of the world have become your slaves."

BOGAR.



## TO RED FLAG

"Slay the best of the gentiles, crush the head of the best serpent."  
MECHILT.

"Take the life of the most just unbeliever." SOPHORIM.

"Assemble, proletarians of all nations. It is by fighting that you will conquer your rights."

"And if a louse in your shirt should exclaim: 'Go and kill! kill!'"

ROPSHIN (BORIS SAVINKOFF).

Lubovin took off his glasses, pushed away the note-book and meditated. A cold shiver ran through his limbs and a feeling of gnawing anguish overcame him.

"That's how matters stand," he thought,— "that explains why Jews are at the head of the faction. Trotzky, whom Victor met at Naples and who has since left for the States on some special mission, Zinovieff, Radek—all Jews, all the leaders are Jews. Lenin alone seems not to be a Jew. Fedor Fedorovitch and Victor are likewise no Jews and yet what a respect Victor has, however, for the Jewish wisdom of the Talmud and the Kabbalah! What strange similarity there is between the apophthegms of ancient Israel and the battle-cry of our faction." Lubovin covered his face with his hands, pressing his knuckles into his eyes.

The noise of a door being opened and the sound of approaching steps brought him back to his senses. Korjikoff entered.

"Ah, Victor Mihailovitch," he exclaimed,— "you have a parcel for me." He clutched it from Lubovin's hands and opened it hurriedly. As he read its contents his face darkened.

"Well, be it so," he muttered with a sigh. "The die is cast. Sooner or later it had to come. Victor Mihailovitch, have you heard the news? Germany and Austria have declared war on Russia, France has followed suit with regard to Germany and very likely England and perhaps Italy will join France against Germany. Europe is ablaze." Have you read Marx and Engels? Have you grasped them?"

"Dimly. . . . For instance this note-book of Victor's. . . ."

"What note-book?"

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

Lubovin passed it on to Korjikoff.

Korjikoff seated himself, took Victor's note-book and looking Lubovin straight in the eyes began, as though he was a teacher instructing his pupil:

"What is a government? Engels' definition is the following: 'A government is an organised form of despotism of one class over the other.' What should therefore be done, so as to free the oppressed class, *i.e.* the working (proletarian) class? The latter should form an organisation which would abolish the division of Society into different classes with irreconcilable and hostile interests. The abolishment of class-interests would do away with the form of coercive subjection of one class under the yoke of the other—*i.e.* the government. The government would die a natural death having lost all reason for existence. Do you follow?"

"Faintly, I admit. I am afraid that your theory corresponds to Victor's notes."

"Well, listen further. Lenin, after studying that statement of Engels,' asks himself: 'By what means is the working class to attain that end?' and answers: 'First of all by converting the oppressed class into a dominating one.' He creates the dictatorship of the working class, possesses himself of the supreme power and, by means of despotism, holds under his entire yoke the unthroned and yet struggling class of sweaters. Do you grasp the idea?"

"I find it rather hard. Well, the long and the short of it is—down with the Tsar? But who's to replace him?"

"Anyone, be it even a scullery-maid."

"A scullery-maid! And how about the Jews? Look at the crowd of them that have arrived here from all the parts of the world. It's easy to say: 'to convert the oppressed class into a dominating one!' but how are you to do it? For instance how could I of a sudden replace Gritzenko at the head of the squadron?"

"I see you cannot do without the corporal's stick! And how about the war? It has begun already."

Lubovin stared at Korjikoff.

## TO RED FLAG

The Emperor Wilhelm has declared war on Russia. The Emperor Franz-Joseph has declared war on Servia. The Austrian Crown Prince has been murdered at Seraïevo. Well, what of that? An apple falls to the ground not owing to centrifugal law, but because it is ripe, its stem has dried; and the war likewise has ripened. The central executive committee has decided that, from the point of view of the working-class and all the labouring masses in Russia, a defeat of the Russian army and of the Tsar-monarchy would not be a disaster. In short our interest lies in Russia's defeat!"

Lubovin of a sudden vividly recollected then the last review at Krasnoie Selo. The sun shone on the monarch's noble face. General Drevenitz, on a massive charger, cantered up to the Tsar with uplifted sabre. Tall, handsome soldiers, the pick of the army, on fine horses, galloped with lances balancing in their hands. Dybenko, a good-looking soldier with a tender maiden's soul, longing to return to his home to marry and live a quiet peaceful peasant-life in a village near Pultava, was galloping in the first row in front of Lubovin, on his right the Lithuanian Adamaïtis was pressing on to him. Right in front rode Lieutenant Sablin, an elegant horseman. The band played. Various infantry regiments, consisting of tall, handsome and strong soldiers were seen leaving the review-plain. To think that they could be defeated, perhaps vanquished, by the Germans so as to enable a scullery-maid, or Jews, or Lenin with his covetous idiotic smile, to govern the country in the place of His Majesty Nicholas II! And all this had been foreseen and was going to be put into execution now, when the war had just only begun!

A mist blinded Lubovin's eyes. He could no more discern Korjikoff's pale features and his short red beard. The majestic sound of the Russian National hymn resounded in his ears. He heard Korjikoff's long speech as it were in a dream: "Marx says:—'The executive power with its monstrous bureaucratism and military institution, with its outspread artificial governmental mechanism, its army of officials reaching half a million besides a military army of another half million—that fearful nest of parasites, creeping, like a gangrene, among the popula-

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

tion and stopping its pores—owes its origin to that period of absolute monarchy, when feudalism was beginning to rot in France,—I should add: At the time of serfdom in Russia. Marx insists on the destruction of this bureaucratic and military machine. Marx refers to the first decree of the French ‘Commune’ which abolished the permanent army and replaced it by arming the population. The ‘Commune’ consisted of town councils, elected in the various districts of Paris by general suffrage. The majority naturally consisted of workmen or recognised representatives of the working-class. The police, so far the instrument of the government power, was likewise deprived of its political functions and was reorganised into a responsible and revokable weapon of the ‘Commune’ as well as the officers of other institutions. And this all led France to Napoleon and to the imperialism which has even to the present day not been rooted out. Do you follow me?”

Lubovin kept silent.

“What a nonsense that French Revolution was,” says our leader Vladimir Iljitch Lenin. The proletarians cannot but wish the defeat of their native imperialism and they must attain the end. We are going to send our emissaries to the front and elsewhere, we’ll profit by the mobilisation and we shall destroy all traces of imperialism. If needed, we shall simply kill its representatives. . . .”

“And slay the best of the ‘goys’” \* whispered Lubovin, but Korjikoff, carried away by his speech, went on: “We,” said Lenin to us, “intend to lull them to sleep by deceit. We shall amalgamate with their forces, preaching victory and at the same time leading the army to defeat. And after Russia’s defeat and humiliation we shall rise. We shall cry aloud that all around are nothing but traitors and spies, we shall call all the upper-class lackeys and varlets of the previous ‘régime,’ putting ourselves forward as the height of courage and self-sacrifice and, after having dug an abyss between the governing class and the population, we shall take the power into our hands. We shall

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\* “Goy”—Jewish for “Christian.”

## TO RED FLAG

deprive the private individuals of their riches, placing them in the possession of the state—thus following the instructions of Marx and Engels. Not one single individual shall have the right of owning were it but a needle or a plough; everything will be socialized—and the people will become our blind weapons.”

“Lenin is of opinion that, on coming to power, it is necessary, not to go in for the Paris chimeras and not to heed the crazy ideas of the Socialist-traitors and demobilize the army, but to create a new army to serve as a weapon of defence for the new government. Our parts for this day’s meeting of the executive committee have been distributed. Our section has been provided with the necessary means and documents and is leaving for the front. Victor has received the mission of doing military work. Under the name of Victor Modjalevsky, scholar of the Kholm lyceum, he is leaving for Sabolotië with instructions to demoralise the Cossacks and, if necessary, destroy the best officers, especially those who are popular among the Cossacks. I have been entrusted with propaganda work and am to spread in the army reports of treason in the staff and other reports likely to create dissatisfaction. As to yourself, Victor Mihailovitch, you will have to get a berth as staff-clerk in some important army-corps and procure information to be forwarded to me. We are to have important sums at our disposal.”

“Where does the money come from?” Lubovin inquired fixing Korjikoff with his eyes.

The latter, who hardly ever blushed, turned crimson and answered abruptly :

“That’s none of your business. We have to obey the instructions that we receive.”

“Treason to one’s native country,” said Lubovin, gently shaking his head. “Spying in favour of one’s enemy, murdering the best officers during the most awful of wars! That you call socialism? That is the teaching that we considered higher than the Christian faith?”

“Victor Mihailovitch,” exclaimed Korjikoff in a threatening



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tone,—“you forget that you are tied by faction-discipline and that there are means to keep you silent.”

“And even for ever!” rejoined Lubovin. “And you call that liberty of opinion?”

He walked towards the door, but did not succeed in leaving the room. At that moment a nimble, fidgety Jew of about thirty-five, with a curly lock of auburn hair on his forehead and eye-glasses on his nose, a small moustache and a reddish beard adorning his pale thin face, rushed into the open door.

### V

“GOOD-DAY, ‘tovaristchi!’ How are you, ‘tovaristch’ Fedor? Let us shake hands. What a joy overwhelms me. How do you do, ‘tovaristch’ Victor? Why are you so gloomy on the eve of our victory? How glorious! You have heard, of course,—war has been declared! War will teach humanity to despise death and to commit manslaughter. You understand, that’s the most important thing. Otherwise everything is ready.”

“You forget, ‘tovaristch’ Brodmann,” said Lubovin, stopping at the door and half-closing it. “you forget, that human beings have also hearts that can love. War does not necessarily carry hatred with it.”

“Love?” resumed Brodmann. “Ridiculous, ‘tovaristch’ Victor. Love is but a sensual feeling. All of you, the so-called educated Russian class and all the Russian authors have long ago hurled the feeling of love into a dirty refuse-heap. You pretend that the Hebrews are to blame. But where do they come in here? You probably remember ‘The Abyss’ by Leonide Andreieff. A work with a pronounced pornographic flavour, isn’t it? You remember with what avidity it was read by slobbery schoolboys and what success it met with in certain quarters. Then again, do you remember in 1905 those sexual clubs, called ‘Ogarki’ (candle-ends) and the young Russian girls with dark circles ’round their eyelids, who stoically committed suicide after having given their sexual, so-called, love to right and left? What a vast transition from Tolstoi’s ‘Kreutzer-Sonata’ to Leonide Andreieff’s ‘Abyss’ and Artzebasheff’s ‘Sanin.’ Litera-

## TO RED FLAG

ture is the reflection of life and Sanin is the ideal bolshevik such as we must strive to become."

"For what purpose?" muttered Lubovin.

"Why to spew into the very hearts of man-kind and abolish in them all aspiration towards glorious deeds?"

"That's nothing new for the Russian lower class accustomed as it is to bad language," answered Lubovin.

"Bother the lower class! A herd of brutes! It's from the souls of those who lead the lower class that all sense of chivalry must be erased and in that respect 'tovaristch' Jacob is right," said Korjikoff.

"Yet the lower class has its religion," Lubovin retorted.

Brodmann whistled.

"What nonsense 'tovaristch' Victor! You positively make me laugh! Religion! Who are the faithful at the present day? Look at the churches? Inside—nothing but old men and women, and outside—a crowd of striplings and girls, laughing, swearing and flirting. And that you call religion? You pretend that the Russian nation is religious? Nothing of the kind. Can you name me a single peasant-girl that hadn't given birth to a child before being wedded? And after that you mean to assert that matrimony is a sacrament? The Russian lower class has long ago forgotten the meaning of sacraments."

"Well, admitting that all your plans are apt to be successful and that our faction comes into power. Who'll listen to us?"

"Don't worry your brains, 'tovaristch' Victor. Do you pretend not to know the Russian nation? You know the Russian proverb: 'Where there is a bog, you are sure to find devils.' Once in power, we shall have a sufficient number of black-guards, outcasts and varlets of the revolution at our disposal. We'll secure them a good living. Man is the meanest animal ever created and the Russian quite specially so. And mind you, not only will they offer their services but they will lick our hands, glorify us, write articles of praise in the press."

"Whom do you mean?" asked Lubovin wearily, "the rabble, the black-guards and cads, perhaps?"

"You are mistaken," rejoined Brodmann with conviction,

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"professors, men of science, the nobility, princes, artists and authors."

"But tell me, who are you that you claim the right of repeating with conviction: we, we?"

"I? I'll answer curtly: I'm a Jew. Yes, a Jew of that race which for centuries has been persecuted by the Russian Government. I have experienced that wrong which is called 'the limit of residence-license.' Surely, at school, you used to fold the flap of your jacket into the shape of a pig's ear shouting in unison with your schoolfellows: 'Jew, Jew, you've eaten a pig's ear!' A limit was fixed for the access of Jews to the university. During a street-demonstration on the Nevsky prospect a Cossack thrashed me with his 'nagaika' \* merely because I am a Jew. Well, let me tell you that I have sworn a solemn oath, that the day will come when I shall be carried in triumph by the young generation of schoolboys and students. And, mind you, those same Cossacks will obey me and will elect me honorary member of their Cossack-settlements. And girls of the best society will come to me to caress me, but I shall torment and torture them before the very eyes of their brothers and their betrothed."

"You don't understand yourself what you are talking about!" exclaimed Lubovin. "Cossacks, young girls!"

"Well, and what of that? Don't you know that there is no limit to human baseness?"

"I believe you are mad. The report of the war must have intoxicated you!"

"Come, come, 'tovaristch'! You know the Latin phrase 'per aspera ad astra'—through abysses to the stars? We'll do it the other way round per astra ad aspera. We'll walk up to the breakers and peep into the black bottomless depths! We shall discover the mystery of Genesis and then laugh!"

"Yes, we shall laugh," repeated Korjikoff, gloomily. He seemed to be dissatisfied with something and every now and then glanced at Lubovin with his small grey eyes.

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\* A whip with a hard leather thong, used by the Cossack soldiers.

## TO RED FLAG

Brodmann could not keep still. He paced up and down the room, stopped in one corner and crossed his arms on his chest in Napoleonic style.

"What an insanity is war!" he exclaimed. "The old world will perish. The nations, driven by power, by the will of their monarchs, will collide to destroy one another. The capitalists of all countries have failed to come to an understanding and millions of human beings will perish in the defence of their gold. Ha, ha! Mankind perishing for the sake of a vile metal! Satan is leading the dance! What we have been mysteriously preparing for years has now come about. These torrents of blood will beget not human beings, but beasts joined on one same thirst for bloodshed, oppression and violence. This war will be the last collision of nations."

Brodmann stopped speaking. Korjikoff sat down by the table and passed his fingers through his abundant hair. He continually glanced at Lubovin, who still remained standing by the door. He was as pale as death and breathed with effort and it seemed as though he were ready to throw himself upon Brodmann.

"Everything will go to hell," Brodmann exclaimed so unexpectedly, that Korjikoff shuddered and lifted his shaggy head.

"Everything will be destroyed. The nations will lose their individuality and perish. Noble-mindedness, honesty, faith and sense of duty, all that will go to the dogs! So much the better! All these bourgeois prejudices are pure rubbish. They and not we have authorized their people to shed blood. And, when they are weakened and the best elements have disappeared, when they will have bled to death, we shall arise and produce an endless bill. Whilst you led a life of drunkenness, of sensuality, whilst you sat in palaces and drove about in motor-cars, whilst you were clad in fine cloth and silk, wore precious stones and enjoyed wine, women and music, we sat in dark working districts, harassed by overwork, we stood in icy-cold draughts in front of red-hot furnaces, we suffocated in the stench of unhealthy dwellings, we abandoned our daughters to your sensual appetites, and died as your slaves!"

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"That is true," Lubovin whispered. He had listened to every word that passed through Brodmann's lips and was thirsting for some revelation which might of a sudden scatter the nightmare which oppressed him and reconcile him with the ideals of the faction.

"Ha! You've bled us sufficiently! It's our turn now to suck your blood. We'll now claim the right of enjoying the tender flesh of your sweet-hearts, we'll settle down in your mansions and consume your reserves of wine and food. We shall organise a feast for the paupers and we shall plunder you of all the riches that you have collected. Ha! Bygone days, ancestors, history, fame! The devil take your fame and history! Everything has become pale and grey, and heroes do not exist! No fear, 'tovaristchi,' the coming revolution will not give you a Napoleon! May the grey, sticky, stinking dirt which grew in the working-men's quarters cover the false splendour of their banners and eagles. A red rag to replace the banner, blood-stained tatters instead of gilt uniforms, universal famine and the smacking of mouths devouring corpses instead of your battle-feasts. The stench of corpses in putrefaction to replace the incense of victory! All that is beautiful and fine must be done away with. And the best of the 'goys' (Christians) must be slain. Slay! And even should but a louse in your shirt cry out—go and slay. May humanity grovel in bestial sensuality, like worms in a dung-hill! That's what I call equality! All identical, all white, slimy, stinking of the dung they feed on! This is the end we are aiming at! The equality of worms!"

Brodmann raised his hand, widened his fingers and exclaimed with a loud voice, not addressing himself to anyone specially:

"We gave you a God and we shall now give you a Tsar!  
..."

The door closed with a bang as Lubovin left the room.

## VI

LUBOVIN went down the steps, hanging on to the bannister, his legs quaking and a black mist before his eyes: he felt that it was the beginning of the end. His aspiration had always been



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directed towards the good of mankind. He had wished that, in the regiment, the singers had not been made to get up at two o'clock of the night for the amusement of light women and drunken officers, that there had been less militarism and that the corporal Ivan Karpovitch had not had the right of shoving his red fist in his, Lubovin's, face. He had always hoped that violence, bloodshed and death-sentences would be abolished. He had joined the faction and had been convinced that it would give his country equality, fraternity and freedom, mutual love and warm feelings. He had wished to have faith in a new religion, akin to the Christian teaching, but without its priests, rituals, mysticism and legends which were beyond his understanding.

Victor's note-book, Korjikoff's harsh words, the mission in store for him, which destined him to betray his country, and, finally, Brodmann's hysterical cries full of ominous meaning, terrified him. That then was their goal! The equality of dung-hill worms! Whom do they propose to replace the handsome, majestic Tsar? A Jew! He, Lubovin, had thought that if the Emperor had got soaked by rain at the review or if he had been killed, there would have been no Tsar any longer and that everything would have changed for the better!

And what would be likely to happen if they proved successful? The triumph of Jews and an ocean of blood.

Yet to return on his steps was out of question. Where could he flee to? Each member of the section is a spy on his neighbour and they all know one another; on the slightest suspicion they are apt to make you disappear.

Should he, on the other hand, fulfill their will? If he went to the front, following their instructions? And if he were found out and tried? That would mean the gallows!

Lubovin crossed the street. He did not notice the sunny bright day, he did not realise the delicate movement the shade of the acacia, oak and plane leaves reflected on the pavement; the glycenias, covered with bunches of lilac flowers, hanging down the front of his house did not cause him any joy. Elsie's dog came up to him wagging its tail but he stroked its back in

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an absent-minded way. "Elsie," he thought, "good Elsie, as faithful and true as a dog. Dear Elsie, so tender, caressing and simple! Had I not better hide in her house, pretend to be ill and lie in bed until they all leave?" Then again, what a monotonous existence: coffee in the morning, the hens to be fed, the post to be attended to, and, as evening pass-time, the everlasting guitar and lute and sweet songs about his beloved Russia.

After all, that meant life, however dull it might be.

He recovered his boldness as he entered his house. Elsie was neither in the dining room nor in the sitting-room, but he heard voices upstairs, and sounds of scuffling in the bed-room. Lubovin walked up the stairs. He half-opened the door and looked in. . . .

He heard a woman's shriek, followed by a low oath. Lubovin gently closed the door. The noise did not abate. He could doubt no more. He rubbed his forehead and came down the stairs. His head felt absolutely void. A pitiless hand had destroyed the last spark of his vital energy. He had lost the sense of everything. In lieu of the bright July day he saw a frightful abyss into which he was being drawn by invisible hands. He did not try to resist them. Twice he muttered: "Marousia's son . . . Victor . . . Victor!" and then exclaimed aloud: "Everything can be expected of him."

And with a firm step, as if entirely conscious of his intention, he crossed the yard to a barn in which wood was kept and where thin but strong laundry ropes hung from the ceiling. He minutely surveyed the barn, closed the door, found a piece of soft soap in a wash-tub, greedily clutched it and having untied the rope, climbed onto a table and began adjusting the rope to a beam.

All this he did quietly, attentively, meticulously; his movements were firm, his hands did not shake, and his dark eyes alone, grown of a sudden much larger, seemed to be void of expression. The soul was not reflected in them.

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### VII

"You seem to have overdone it, Brodmann," Korjikoff said, "you must not forget that Lubovin still hesitates. He can't understand you."

"Well, then he can go to hell," answered Brodmann, as he took a seat opposite Korjikoff. "To tell you the truth, I feel such a flow of energy, that I must vent it on somebody. What would you say, if I repeated my words at the meeting? That would be fine, wouldn't it?"

"Come, tovaristch, we had better discuss the position of our section. I don't rely on Lubovin any longer. He's a coward and a milksop."

"Is he apt to betray us?"

"No, he is not even fit for that. He'll simply keep idle and shilly-shally."

"There's your son, tovaristch," said Brodmann looking out of the window, "he's a trump and fit for any job. He is crossing the street from Lubovin's house."

"So much the better. I'm expecting him. You must leave us to ourselves."

"Are you sending him off today?"

"Yes, to Kiental for money and instructions and thence to the front."

"That's good."

The door was flung open with a bang and Victor bounded into the room, boisterous, flushed and in a gay mood.

Victor was in all the bloom and splendour of his eighteen years. He was the portrait of his father, Lieutenant Sablin in his youth, except that Victor's hair was darker, more like Marousia's and he was stronger and more bulky, a sign of his semi-peasant origin. That same slight tinge of capricious passion noticeable in Sablin's fine quivering nostrils and in the sensual fold of his mouth and which gave his features a fascination for the weaker sex, was reproduced in Victor's features in a more pronounced and a coarser fashion. He was bound to impress girls of the lower class or women of a riper age, whereas a

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

higher minded woman, with a knowledge of real beauty, could not have been attracted by him. There was something repulsive in his beauty. His thick hair was cut short at the neck, but two long locks fell on his forehead. His big grey eyes were hard and impudent, looking overbearingly and fixedly at everybody. He was as yet beardless, his young moustache was clipped short, only two little black tufts appearing under his nostrils. His neck, well shaped, long, and muscular, showed his indomitable will. His loose white shirt with a wide open collar discovered part of his chest, showing a dark garnet attached to a gold chain. He wore a wide belt, long trousers and tan shoes.

Without greeting anyone he threw himself onto Korjikoff's camp-bed and burst out laughing.

"By gad, that beats cock-fighting," he began, half-smothered by his hilarity. "Just fancy. I went across to visit auntie, who had promised to treat me to chocolate. I drank my cup, looking at her the while. Not despicable after all, fat, plump and appetising! The sun shone gaily, the room was warm and there was a scent of perfume. I decided to chance it. 'Come, auntie, into the bed-room,' and she, the silly fool, followed me, not knowing what I meant. Once inside, I flung her onto the bed. She didn't utter a word of protest, turned crimson and breathed hard. . . . All of a sudden the door opened and uncle appeared in the door-way. Elsie saw him and yelled. . . . I likewise saw his reflection in the looking-glass. 'No hurry,' I said to myself, —'you just wait a bit, uncle.' And fancy! He, the fool, closed the door and went down on tip-toes. What an idiot . . . !"

Victor again burst into a fit of laughter.

Brodmann joined, whilst Fedor Fedorovitch looked serious.

"What on earth could you have found in that old, painted woman?" he said calmly.

"Absolutely nothing. A passing fancy. Why shouldn't I add her to my collection?"

"Eh, Victor Victorovitch! You should drop all this foolery. This is not the time for it. You are required for serious work. Good-bye, tovaristch Brodman," he turned to the latter, who

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had got up at the beginning of the conversation,—“drop in again later on.”

“Now listen, Victor,” Fedor Fedorovitch began when Brodmann had left the room. “I’ve got to speak to you.”

“Well, go ahead!” answered Victor, staring at Korjikoff.

They were on good terms, but chiefly of a business nature. There had never been any fond feeling between them. Victor hardly ever called Korjikoff “father,” addressing him as a rule as “Fedor Fedorovitch.” Korjikoff always called him by his Christian name. They had never spoken of Victor’s birth or of the first years of his childhood.

Korjikoff brought some documents and began explaining the work which had been assigned to Victor. He gave him some maps, instructing him how to get through to Sabolotie, how to join the Cossacks and what to do when he arrived at his destination.

“You must undermine the authority of the superiors, sow suspicion into the souls of the lower class, lie, calumniate and create bad blood wherever and whenever you can,” said Korjikoff.

“And slay the best,” Victor rejoined.

Korjikoff frowned and kept silent for a while.

“Victor, maybe we shall never meet again. So far I have never spoken to you about your birth and your early childhood.”

“I expect I was born the usual way and not found under a cabbage-leaf.”

Korjikoff fetched a portrait of Marousia and passed it on to Victor.

“That’s your mother,” he said.

Victor began inspecting with curiosity the old photograph of Marousia taken when she was still a schoolgirl in her school-tresses.

“A nice-looking girl,” said Victor. “It was very smart of you to have enticed her!”

“Why, it’s your mother, Victor!” Korjikoff exclaimed with indignation.



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"Well, and what of that? Isn't a mother a woman? The only difference lies in her being eighteen years older than I am. Elsie is still older, I bet."

"Drop that, Victor! She was very unhappy and died in giving you birth."

"Poor thing! Was she young?"

"She was nineteen years old."

"I'm sorry for the girl. I expect you must also have felt sorry for her. How could you have been so careless, Fedor Fedorovitch? You should have attended to her better."

Korjikoff could hardly hide his disgust.

"I wasn't her husband in the true sense of that word," said Korjikoff, handing Victor Sablin's photograph in a military uniform.

"I understand my mother's taste," said Victor. "A smart chap. By jove, he looks hard to resist. And a lovelace, I bet. An officer! So I am the son of an officer! That's a curious freak of nature! How could you allow him to seduce your wife? Surely she was not as great a fool as Elsie?"

"Hold your tongue, Victor! You know nothing. Listen."

And Korjikoff told the whole story of Marousia's misfortune. When he came to the moment when Lubovin forced himself into Sablin's lodging, Victor started laughing.

"The ass! Fancy his shooting! And he missed, probably. As if he were capable of killing. However, damn it all, it was after all a romantic adventure. The son of an officer! And a rich one perchance! Did he provide for my mother? Did you marry her on the ground of that provision?"

Korjikoff explained the reasons which had decided him to marry Marousia.

"What an absurd point of view. Do you mean to say that a girl has not the right to give birth to a child?"

"Victor," said Korjikoff, "what are your feelings with regard to that officer?"

"I have none whatever."

"He seriously injured your mother and made her suffer."

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"Come, come, she must have enjoyed it. After all he was a smart officer. Was he a hussar?"

"He begat you and abandoned you? What do you feel for him?"

"As officer or as father?"

"As father."

"Absolutely nothing. Such things happen. He got his fun out of it, so how is one to blame him. I may likewise have begotten children: well, what of that? He is a bad communist who worries his mind with such trifles. As officer, of course, I hate him like the rest. I'd be ready to throttle him without mercy. He is sure to be an eminent officer, and as such can cause us any amount of harm. I am ready to strangle him with my own hands if you wish me to?"

"Avenge Marousia," Korjikoff said in a low voice, and covered his face with his hands.

"And how about you, father, eh? You loved her, eh? Ha, ha, ha! That beats everything! Ha, ha, ha."

Korjikoff rose and paced the room. He found it hard to subdue his emotions. Having pulled himself together at last, he continued calmly:

"When are you going to Kiental?"

"At once," Victor answered.

"And when do you expect to be back?"

"I shan't return. From Kiental I intend going straight to the train."

"Good."

Korjikoff left the room without looking at Victor.

The prolonged howling of a dog, shouts and sobs in Lubovin's yard startled Korjikoff. He went into the yard. He guessed what had happened. "He had no choice, so he made an end of it," he thought, frowning. He had known Victor Mihailovitch for nearly forty years and had a warm feeling for him after his fashion.

In the barn he saw Lubovin's body hanging in the carefully soaped rope, his head slightly inclined to one side. Elsie was

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sobbing and whining under the body, echoed by the dog. Brodmann was shouting something.

With the help of Elsie (Brodmann afraid of corpses, only waved his arms) Korjikoff lowered Lubovin's body and carried it into the house.

It was getting dusk when he came out. The moon was rising above the mountains. Victor, in travelling togs, with a knapsack on his shoulders was on the point of starting for Kiental.

"Stop a moment, Victor," Korjikoff cried. "Have you heard? Victor Mihailovitch has just hanged himself."

"What an idiot!" was Victor's rejoinder. His face did not betray the least sign of emotion. It was cold, self-sufficient and calm, as usual.

"Victor, won't you say a last farewell to him?"

"What rot. What's the good once he's dead."

Brodmann stood in the gateway looking with admiration at Victor's retiring figure.

"That I call power of will," he said touching Korjikoff's sleeve. "A bolshevik to the backbone."

## VIII

SABOLOTIE is supposed to be a small Lublin, Lublin is supposed to be a small Warsaw, and that town being often considered to be a small Paris, Sabolotie ended by being a small corner of Paris in the eyes of its inhabitants. Built in the thirteenth century in the midst of forests and marshes, Sabolotie was, for a long period of time, a stronghold of the catholic faith. It possessed a huge church (in polish "Kostiol") with marble monuments in honour of its founders, the Counts' Sabolotski, a magnificent town-hall with a fine staircase built in the fourteenth century and some very fine old oaks and lime-trees. The authorities used to greet Peter the Great from the steps of the town-hall, when he passed through that town, returning from abroad. The grave of Bogdan Khmelnitzki's son, Iuri, was one of the noteworthy relics of the neighbourhood. The town, though small, was well paved and provided with water-pipes and drains. The kerbs were adorned with rows of young chestnut-

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trees. The town further boasted of an old market-hall with arcades under the shelter of which small Jewish shops were displayed, of the former palace of the Counts Sabolotski, converted into the officers' mess of the Cossack regiment in garrison there. Besides these buildings, Sabolotie had barracks, and an old fortress dating from the reign of Nicholas I, with ramparts and bastions. The town was neat and gay, enlivened by a crowd of officers, Cossack soldiers and Jews.

On a fine July day of the year 1914, the town was basking in the sun and the clean stones glittered so brightly that they dazzled one's eyes. The windows of the houses stood wide open, counterpanes and pillows were displayed on the window-sills for the purpose of being aired and dried, and here and there a woman's face, with big soft eyes, a well-cut nose and red sensual lips would appear.

Garrison-officers' wives sat on benches in the shady square sheltered by the wide-spread branches of the chestnut-trees, and surrounded by children at play. Small spots of sunshine pierced through the leaves of the trees onto the sand of the square, which, tidily kept, with its patches of green lawn, attracted the inhabitants, filling them with a sensation of lazy bliss. No wonder the priest of the regiment, father Bekarevitch, would continually repeat that the climate of Sabolotie could be compared to that of the Riviera.

It was mid-day. Of a sudden the whole place was filled with the mellow sounds of a military band and the noise of horses' hoofs on the pavement. The sounds filled the street, echoed from the walls, and spread all about, joyous, boisterous and gay. A Cossack regiment was returning from field-practice.

The Colonel of the regiment, Pavel Nicholaievitch Karpoff, rode at its head on a fine chestnut, bred at the Don Provalsk stud. He was a tall and handsome man of about forty-five, with a dark, well-kept beard slightly tinged with grey. He was slim and well-built and his seat and whole appearance impressed one with the conviction that he was a first-rate and daring horseman. A wide leather belt to which a revolver and a field-glass were attached, was buckled 'round his waist. At his right rode

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his Lieutenant Colonel, Semen Ivanovitch Korshounoff on a well-fed gold-chestnut, whilst his adjutant Gueorgui Petrovitch Kums koff, a small, fat officer with thin hair, kept to his left.

They were followed by a row of trumpeters. Their horses sidled and pressed against each other, whilst the musicians, in fresh khaki tunics and caps on one side, in Cossack fashion, played a rhythmical and joyous march. Karpoff turned down a side street, stopped his horse and watched the regiment as it defiled past him, his eyes shining with pleasure as the Cossacks turned their heads in his direction with uplifted chins. The music stopped. The lances moved to and fro with a clinking sound. All these fine looking, sunburnt fellows, well equipped, with their wavy thick hair protruding from under their caps, glanced attentively and gaily at their Colonel. They knew that they were young and smart-looking and that their Colonel was admiring them. They were proud of being Cossacks of the dauntless Don regiment, the best regiment of the cavalry division, sons of the powerful Russian army. They felt that a better army was hard to find. The horses of the first "sotnia" (Cossack troop of one hundred horses), all of the same golden-chestnut colour, splendidly matched and trained, carefully groomed, with bushy combed-out tails and uplifted nervous heads trotted hurriedly past the Colonel. The horses of the second "sotnia" were a shade darker, those of the third—light bay and the forth—dark bay, and all equally well-matched. Karpoff knew every horse and every man, and loved them all, as though they had been his children. That pale fair-haired Cossack Kholderskoff, whose sad eyes met those of his Colonel's, had returned from leave but a week before. He had gone to the Don to bury his young wife. His only child, a little girl of two years of age, the sole link that attached him to this world, had remained under the care of perfect strangers and the far-off "stanitsa" (Cossack settlement). Close behind him rode Pastukhoff, the troop smith, a short and bulky red-bearded soldier, the Hercules of the regiment, with, by his side, a handsome youth with a small moustache, Poliakoff, son of rich parents,



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very spoilt, and who could not, for the life of him, succeed in learning to leap over the leaping-block.

"Has Poliakoff finally been taught to leap over the leaping-block," Karpoff inquired addressing 'Essaoul' Captain Trailin, standing next to him on a fidgety grey.

"He's getting on, Colonel," the Captain answered, with a military salute.

"I find, Ivan Ivanovitch, that the horses of your squad are not looking fit enough."

"I positively don't know what to do," Trailin replied.

"They must be better fed," Karpoff went on. "If the squad isn't in the same trim condition as the others, I'll reduce the sergeant-major to the ranks. Karguin," he cried severely to a Cossack,—“what do you mean by not turning your head in my direction, eh?”

The startled Cossack instantly obeyed.

"Medviedeff's bridle is again slack."

"He notices everything," Trailin thought, breathing more freely after his troop had passed by, giving room to the artillery and maxim-gun detachments. The well-fed chestnuts with their glossy coats dragged without the slightest effort the two-wheelers on which the maxim-guns were mounted, cased in khaki casings. Every buckle of the equipment glittered, every strap of the harness was accurately cleaned and polished. Karpoff's face brightened. The maxim-gun detachment, consisting of the pick of the regiment had passed by in exemplary trim. It was followed by the fifth squad on grey horses and by the sixth on black horses. The dark-bearded "Essaoul" Sakharoff, Captain of the sixth, followed his Cossacks and horses with enamoured eyes.

"Konstantin Petrovitch" Karpoff exclaimed, turning towards the Captain, "that troop of yours is splendid. With such a regiment I'd be ready to go to the front at any moment."

Then, addressing the adjutant, he inquired whether there were any papers to attend to.

"Just a few," Colonel, "a complaint has again been lodged against 'Khoroundji (Lieutenant) Lasareff."

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Has he been licking the Jews again."

"Yes, a little."

"He's always at it, every blessed Saturday."

"To tell you the truth they are getting damned impudent. This time it was they who provoked him."

"You don't say so! Roman Petrovitch is not a man who can be provoked with impunity. Had he had too much drink?"

No, he was perfectly sober."

"Well, I'll examine the case," said the Colonel, dismounting in front of his house and stroking his horse.

### IX

PAVEL NICHOLAIEVITCH KARPOFF had spent his whole life in military service amongst his Cossacks, and his interest was concentrated in field-exercise, horses, "djigitovkas" (jymkhana), drill, Cossack songs, dust in warm weather, mud on rainy days. Though he was married and father of a son aged seventeen who had already joined the military college, his family represented to him but a secondary interest, absorbed as he was by his service. His son was to follow his father's career and Pavel Nicholaievitch laid particular weight on his being in every way prepared for the army, properly equipped and provided for. He had concluded a love-marriage when quite young, and had begun courting his wife (Anna Vassilievna Dobrikoff) when she was still a pupil of the Mariinsk boarding school, timid and shy, and he, a rising and dauntless cadet of the Novotcherkask military college. They had met in the street and at dancing parties organized by the respective schools. She had a gentle smile, a tender look in her big honest eyes, with such an expression of faithful love in them when she looked at Karpoff, that he understood the happiness in store for him. Karpoff told her of his modest position, preparing her for a very humble life akin to poverty in some out of the way garrison of distant Poland. The sole answer he obtained was a tender look and the words of a Latin girl that had struck her at school: "Where you are Cajus, there shall I, Caja, likewise be."

And indeed, at first, they underwent actual misery. Anna

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would go herself every morning to market with a basket and cook the meals, aided by her husband's orderly. The room they rented from a Jew, on the border of a small Polish town, was small and stuffy; not seldom were they placed in a serious pecuniary dilemma, when a horse died and had to be replaced by a new one. He would get into debt, undergo humiliation when unable to repay what he owed in due time, and yet they remained faithful to one another. She mended his linen, darned his socks, waiting patiently though left entirely to herself while he was absent on field duty. What anxiety fell to her lot, when he was commissioned to subdue riots or revolutionary attempts! She had been stoical enough to part with her beloved son, when he was sent to the military school, and she had again remained alone to lead the same hum-drum life of petty cares and annoyances with one thought in her mind: Aliësha's return home for the holidays. It was a hard life and yet not without glimpses of happiness. A successful review, a prize won at a race, their mutual admiration one of the other at regimental balls where the ladies appeared in blouses and danced with Cossack lieutenants with moist hands and without gloves, and where the supper consisted of hashed cutlets, macaroni and ice cream,—letters from their son, a word of praise from the Colonel,—all these small events of life made it bearable. A monotonous existence some would say; Karpoff and his wife however never complained.

Only seven years ago had a change for the better taken place in their life, a small legacy having come to the wife. Karpoff was thereby put in a position to join the Cavalry school, where he succeeded in being promoted on his merits, and in 1911, quite unexpectedly, he obtained the command of a Don regiment of the N. division. The regiment in question needed to be reformed. The previous Colonel in command was given to drink and a gambler into the bargain; the officers led an idle life and the soldiers were untidy and dirty. Karpoff succeeded, in the space of three years, in converting it into the best regiment of the division. From six in the morning he would be present at the grooming of the horses and at drill; he induced

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the officers to go in for sport and athletic games, raised the standard of horsemanship and rifle-shooting, and worked all day. And when, tired and worn he would return to his hearth after a rough day's work he would find comfort and happiness by the side of his Annita.

Meanwhile political events had developed into a mighty torrent. Karpoff, however, took no interest in what was going on. He never read the reports of the Duma sessions and knew nothing about the various factions, not even about Rasputin or the influence he was supposed to have over the Tsar. All his life he had adored and went on adoring the Emperor and the Imperial family, and at church parade on Imperial festival days he always found appropriate words to deliver to his Cossacks.

His example did not fail to have a beneficent influence on his regiment. Officers and soldiers, without exception, were devoted to the regiment, to their Emperor and to their mother-country, ignorant of political events, fulfilling their duty towards man and God.

As Karpoff reached his house, a splendid white Pomeranian dog, his wife's pet, greeted him. His orderly met him in the lobby. He passed into the sitting-room with its shiny floor and cheap framed pictures, where everything was simple and somewhat shoddy and yet neat and comfortable. Anna Vladimirovna, tall and slim, looking much younger than her forty-three years, without a single grey hair in her thick, smoothly-dressed black head, met him with a tender look in her grey eyes.

Listen, Annita! Maybe it's all talk, but please after dinner have a look at the pack saddles, make a list, together with Nicholaï, of my things and decide with him how to pack them, because, if we were suddenly mobilized, I would not have a second left to dispose of my private matters."

"Is there anything new?" Anna Vladimirovna inquired.

"No, nothing. Besides mobilisation does not necessarily mean war. You remember in 1911 we were mobilized and yet nothing happened. However, Annita, if war is declared, you must go to Novotcherkask."

She kept silent. They had always lived together and had

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never parted. But she understood that women could not interfere in war matters and that she could not accompany her husband. Such were the exigencies of military service, and that service meant everything.

She looked at her husband with unutterable sadness and said :

"So be it. If necessary I shall go to Novotcherkask. I shall see to everything. Now let us have dinner."

### X

KARPOFF felt tired after field-duty and went to sleep early on the sofa in his study, which was next to his wife's bedroom. But in a few minutes he awoke again and listened to see if she slept. No sound came from her room. "God grant that nothing happen," he thought.

In the neighbouring room lay Anna Vladimirovna, her face buried in the pillow. Her heart instinctively foresaw the inevitableness of war and bled at the thought of the separation that awaited them. She shed no tears, for her grief was too deep, she never complained nor did she accuse anyone, convinced as she was, that the coming trial was the cross she was doomed to bear, and meant to do her duty, a duty prescribed by Him, whom she dared not blame. The twenty-four years of their mutual life seemed to her a period of undisturbed bliss. She rose softly from her bed and went down on her knees in front of the image of the Don Virgin Mary, praying in silence.

The kitchen-door bell rang, and a low, excited voice was heard. The orderly, bare-footed, entered Karpoff's study.

"Your Honour," he whispered, "A dispatch from Division Headquarters."

"Give it here," said Karpoff, striking a match.

The official form bore the following words, jotted down in a hurried hand-writing, and the signature of the Chief-of-Staff, Lieutenant-General Lorberg: "twenty-three o'clock and fifty-nine minutes of the 17th July, 1914, to be considered as the starting moment of the mobilization."

His wife stood at the door in a dark dressing-gown, looking at Karpoff.



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"Is the war declared," she asked.

"Yes," answered Karpoff.

"Are you going at once?"

"Yes! Nicholai, run across to the adjutant and tell him to assemble all the troop commanders, the pay-master Korshounoff and all the staff officers at Headquarters without delay."

When the orderly had left the room, Anna Vladimirovna threw herself into her husband's arms, and for a few seconds they remained embraced without exchanging a word. Then she wrenched herself from him and seemed calmer.

"When are you starting?" she asked.

"At six in the morning," he answered.

"Do you wish 'Shaloun,' to go under the pack saddle?"

"Yes, and have 'Sharik' put to the two-wheeler."

"I'll have all the warm things packed in the two-wheeler."

"Write to Aliosha that I do not wish him to be commissioned to my regiment."

"I understand. You want him to join a regiment of the guards."

"Yes, since we are to be separated anyhow."

He dressed hurriedly with the aid of his wife, who accompanied him to the stairs with a lighted candle, a look of despair in her eyes. The door closed on its squeaky block and the sound of his footsteps gradually vanished along the deserted street.

Anna Vladimirovna went down on her knees before the ikon and spent half an hour in prayer. Then she lit all the lamps in the rooms, and, aided by the orderly, who had just returned, started packing her husband's things for the campaign and her own for her departure to Novotcherkask. The rest of their belongings had to be abandoned to perfect strangers.

## XI

THE dispatch had been a secret one, and yet Sabolotië lived through a night of anxiety and excitement. Light pierced through the chinks of the shutters and through the window-blinds of almost every house, and mysterious sounds and voices

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were heard from all sides. Every inhabitant of the town seemed to know that Russia was being involved in a war with Austria and Germany. Before the officers had found time to assemble, an unseen messenger had spread the unwelcome news from village to village, from town to town, to the confines of the country and beyond.

A term of six hours had been allowed for the mobilization, which meant that, precisely six hours after the fixed time, the regiment was to leave for the frontier. The plan had been worked out and written down many years previously, and the entire staff had full preparatory instructions which now only needed to be put into execution. Hanging lamps burned brightly in the regimental Headquarters. The windows stood wide open into the dark night outside. Karpoff found all the clerks at their desks, and the pay-master Korshounoff, the adjutant and the majority of the officers awaiting him in his private office. Everyone of them guessed the reason of their having been called, but they all kept silent on the matter. They had all appeared in summer tunics with silver shoulder-straps, embossed in gold with the number of the regiment, and with sabres at their side.

"Colonel," exclaimed the adjutant amidst the general silence, "all are present."

The officers placed themselves, as usual on such occasions, according to the numbers of their troops and Karpoff glanced tenderly at his staff.

"Gentlemen!" he began with his calm, even baritone voice, well-trained by years of experience in the ranks, "the mobilization has been announced for fifty-nine minutes past twenty-three o'clock. It is now six minutes past mid-night. You must all set to work. Mobilization does not necessarily mean war. Explain this to the Cossacks. At six the regiment must assemble on the garrison field. I count, gentlemen, on everything being done as thoroughly as always."

The officers bowed in silence.

"Do you wish the colors uncased?" the adjutant inquired.

The Colonel hesitated for a moment.

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"Yes," he answered.

And somehow this last instruction, unimportant as it might have seemed, made them feel certain that war was inevitable.

The office gradually cleared. The adjutant fetched some sealed red envelopes containing instructions, with an inscription in large characters: "To be unsealed on receipt of mobilization orders," and passed them to the Colonel.

Karpoff seated himself at the table and began examining and signing the documents.

Round about, the small town was full of a muffled sound. All the windows of the barracks, which had so far looked dark and dim with their dingy night-lights, suddenly shone brightly from top to bottom. In the streets and in the courtyards anxious-looking individuals began to show themselves. The wide gates of the forage-stables were thrown wide open to give passage to soldiers dragging new carts, which they loaded and forwarded to the barracks. Parcels, trunks and boxes with private belongings and parade-uniforms which had to be left behind at Sabolotie were carried out. No one had for a moment suspected that Sabolotie could be abandoned by the troops.

## XII

THE short summer night was on the decline and yet Karpoff was still writing and signing documents in the office, answering messengers from the squads and officers who came for various instructions. Among the papers was a heap of passports. He opened the first passport-book to sign it and stopped involuntarily. On the first page, with its double eagle, he read the following words: "Anna Vladimirovna Karpoff, aged forty-three, Greek-orthodox, wife of a Colonel. . . ."

He saw her with his mind's eyes, sitting late at night in the empty lodging, all by herself and maybe forever alone. He recollected how he had met her in the big cool and military cathedral in the midst of a group of other young girls, her school companions, all dressed alike, how she had consented to be his on that memorable moonlit night in the acacia-alley of

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the Alexander garden with its overhanging branches and sweet-smelling flowers.

And now here he was signing a separate passport for her, just at that time of his life, when, with approaching old age, they needed one another more than ever.

Hastily he signed the document. The pale dawn, accompanied by a slightly cool breath of air penetrated the room through the open windows.

### XIII

AT six o'clock on the morning of the 18th July, 1914, the second brigade of the Nth cavalry division was being drawn up on the so-called Borodin garrison review field.

At that moment Karpoff was on his way to his lodging. The samovar was peacefully steaming in the dining room, buns were disposed in an iron bread-basket, with butter and cream. Anna Vladimirovna, in her best dress, was waiting for her husband. She looked quite calm, although her swollen eyelids betrayed the suffering that night had brought. They hurried over their tea and evaded all that they longed to say, for fear of reopening the wounds that the coming separation had dealt to their hearts.

"Are you going to ride Sardanapal?" she asked.

"Yes. Bombardos will be led."

"I am glad, because Sardanapal is less restless. I have put a pair of spare stirrups into your box. Nicholai knows where they are."

"Well, good-bye, darling. Don't forget to write!"

"Where to?"

"To the front."

She embraced him and crossed him several times with the sign of the cross. Hot tears ran down her cheeks and she would probably have fainted had he not torn himself away and gone down to the court-yard where his horse stood, ready saddled. As he was mounting, she came up to him with trembling lips, gave a lump of sugar to Sardanapal who had recognized her, and clung for a moment to her husband's knee, leaving traces

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

of her tears on the red stripe of his riding breeches. Karpoff rode off through the gate.

His regiment was waiting, ready to start on the review-field outside the town. The fifth troop, which was late, was trotting from the rear and Captain Tararin, on a big grey, not in the least suited to his size, seemed flushed and angry. A detachment with the colours stood apart, waiting for the regiment to start. The Hussars were drawing up in line on the right side waiting for their Colonel, von Weber, a robust officer of German origin.

Karpoff glanced lovingly at his men. The regiment was in first rate trim. The vans, freshly painted, stood in a symmetrical row close behind the maxim-gun detachment. The lances were so perfectly aligned, that viewed sideways they seemed to form one single lance. The young, sunburnt faces of the Cossacks were clean and their hair brushed. They had had their breakfast and did not make the impression of having passed a sleepless night, spent in hasty and feverish work. Inhabitants of the town began assembling on all sides. The wives of the Hussar and Cossack officers formed a separate group, spotted with bright sun-shades.

In front of the ranks a green-gold altar had been placed and the tall, slim priest of the Hussar regiment in lilac-coloured vestments and a priest's cap was preparing for the service.

The general commanding the division, old General Lorberg, accompanied by the chief-of-staff, had arrived and was riding past the regiment, greeting the men and coughing every now and then. He was nervous, feeling that he ought to say something to the soldiers and not knowing what to say—war was not yet declared and he was far from being convinced that it would be declared. He said nothing and, frowning and puckering his short, needle-like moustache, he cantered to the middle of the field, almost to the very altar, shouting in a hoarse voice:

“Brigade, sheath sabres! Shoulder lances! Attention!”

After the command, repeated by the Colonels of the regiments and the Commanders of the squadrons and troops, had been executed, he again exclaimed:



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"Trumpeters, strike up for prayers!"

The regimental adjutants carried the colours and standards toward the altar. The choir left the ranks of the respective regiments and ran to the altar. The priest arrayed himself in a bright green-gold embroidered surplice and, cross in hand, made a few steps forward.

"In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost," he began with his sonorous voice,—“Christian soldiers! The solemn hour of the great and hard trial has come, when you will have to prove to the Almighty whether you are indeed the Christian Army ready to sacrifice your lives for the sake of your faith, your Tsar and your mother-country.”

The rising wind caught his words and often carried it aside. The field-kitchens of the hussar regiment rattled on the high-road; a dog led on a string by an orderly wriggled and yelped.

The priest ended the service and the choir began singing: “To the Lord of Heaven. . . .” The words of the litany sounded too common-place for the event. The ladies stood some way off, some good looking, others plain, some rich, others poor, many of them accompanied by children. They knew that war was inevitable, for otherwise they should not have had to abandon their homes to seek refuge all over Russia and amongst strangers. War had not been declared and yet its destroying blast, its horrors had already begun to be felt and the first to be ruined and thrown into the street were the families of the officers of the frontier garrisons. After service was over and the altar had been removed, the General in command of the division brandished his sabre above his head and delivered a short speech. “Mind you, my fine fellows!” he said, “Don’t plunder peaceful citizens and do not offend them. Don’t forget that war has not yet been declared, and should it be declared, well, then let us all die for our faith, our Tsar and our mother-country!”

“We shall do our best, Your Excellency,” shouted the men.

“Well, God help you! Cossacks to the vanguard!”

Karpoff delivered the command, the first squadron trotted to the front, the patrols cantered on to the right and to the left.

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

The second squadron started in double column and soon the whole highroad as far as the forest was covered with horsemen in pairs at regular intervals. Karpoff purposely kept the trumpeters back and when the regiment was in full swing the band struck up the regimental march.

And so, did the vanguard of the Russian Army go to war.

Anna Vladimirovna followed the vanishing regiment with dry eyes. The sounds of the regimental band subsided and the trumpeters, their trumpets glittering in the sun, joined their respective squadrons; the dust rose higher and higher hiding the horsemen from the view and the tips of the lances alone still shone above the column. The grey snake of the hussar column began to screen them, the transport carts rattled, the field-kitchens with coals burning in the furnace emitted small cloud-lets of smoke, a belated Cossack galloped past, and the dusty garrison field became deserted and dull. The inquisitive crowd gradually dispersed. Sabolotië blazed under the morning rays of the hot July sun.

"Well, those aren't likely to return," Anna Vladimirovna heard someone say.

She staggered and nearly fell to the ground and Traïlin's wife had to support her. For a few minutes she stumbled forward, losing every notion of what was happening, with the fragments of the march resounding in her ears and her brains racked by the thought that all was over. Their simple, humdrum life was at an end. All about, other sad-looking, staggering women were returning, some shedding tears. One young woman, married but six months before and already in the family way, Captain Isaïeff's wife, was sobbing aloud and two Polish women, perfect strangers to her, were leading her, making attempts to console her. The regiments were on their way to the frontier.

## XIV

For eight days Karpoff's regiment had been standing at a distance of twelve miles from the frontier in a small Polish village called Barkhatcheff in the midst of the dense green oak

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forests of Labounsk. A broad river flowed through the village, gaily murmuring over the stones. The village-school, abandoned by both teacher and pupils, stood close by the river, and the staff of the Don regiment had taken quarters in the school-room between the desks that had been shoved towards the walls. Chromos representing the life of the bees, the various nations of the world, agricultural implements, the aurora borealis, a large map of Europe, the reproduction of the two hemispheres, maps of Africa, America and Australia adorned the walls, and above the teacher's desk hung framed oil-prints of the Emperor and the Empress.

Lieutenant Colonel Korshounof and the officers were awkwardly seated on the low benches of the school-desks, whilst the regimental clerks made calculations and prepared field lists. It was early in the morning of the 26th of July. The eve of that day news had arrived that Germany and then Austria had declared war on Russia; the reconnoitering detachment had received instructions to cross the frontier and "get into contact with the enemy."

The weather was stifling hot, the sky was absolutely cloudless and at night the moon shone brightly. The school-yard, still damp with the morning dew, was crowded with men surrounding a young fair-haired Cossack Likhatcheff and the tall, stout, black-bearded Arkhipoff who had just returned with a report and two small bay horses, saddled with foreign-looking saddles, to which rifles, swords with yellow plaited sword-tassels, blue tunics lined with white sheep-skin, and red caps were attached. Both caps and tunics were adorned with gold braid. One of the caps was cut and blood-stained. The white sheep-skin likewise bore traces of blood.

Those were the first trophies of the regiment.

## XV

As soon as the report of the declaration of war was made known, the Hungarian cavalry division, stationed opposite the Russian town Vladimir-Volynsk, decided to capture it by a

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cavalry charge, taking possession of the army munition and food-supply, thus paralysing the mobilization.

The division consisted of Hungarian magnates. They were mounted on splendid bay and black horses and their uniforms were embroidered with silver. The patrols and spies reported that the Russian cavalry division garrisoned at Vladimir-Volynsk had left the town and that the Borodinsk infantry regiment alone had remained and was busy mobilizing.

The Hungarians decided to die or gain immortal fame. The division was under the command of Count Muncaczy, a short, sinewy, strong man of fifty-five, with a ruddy face and a long, grey drooping moustache. His five sons, four of whom were married, were commissioned to that division, all smart young fellows. The youngest, a lad of sixteen, served as orderly to his father.

Early on the 30th of July, the division started in brilliant order and at a trot across the Russian boundary towards Vladimir-Volynsk through the thick forests. The whole division was equipped as if for a review in blue-green shakoes, dark-blue embroidered Hungarian tunics, with hussar pelisses of the same hue thrown across the left shoulder. On approaching the town the division pulled up. The canteen-keepers unbottled sparkling Hungarian wine which was soon drunk to the health of the King and Emperor, to the glory of the Hungarian cavalry and to the welfare of the fair sex.

Meanwhile the silent and earnest Russian infantry, advised by his patrols, was pouring into the trenches in grey, regular files, the bayonets glittering in the sun. The soldiers disposed their fire-arms on the parapets which were hardly perceptible above the level of the ground. The officers were giving instructions in a subdued tone:

"You mustn't shoot, unless by command, even if attacked. Aim according to my instructions and without hurrying. Remember your drill. Hold your breath and concentrate your whole mind on your shot, aiming attentively."

It was about ten in the morning, when the Hungarian cavalry drew up in echelon order. Count Muncaczy, the eldest son of

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the General in command, Colonel of the first regiment, mounted on a well-groomed arab and attired in a brilliant uniform covered with silver, made the round of the regiment with words of encouragement.

"You needn't fear that Russian rabble! Remember 1814 and avenge your brothers!"

"Slay them without mercy!"

The General himself rode up at a gallop on a fine hunter arrayed in gold and silk, embraced his son in the presence of the whole regiment and exclaimed:

"Forward, for the fame of Hungary, of our King and Emperor!"

The regiment emerged from the wood and gradually came into the field which lay between the forest and the town. About a mile off the white walls of the stone and wooden houses, the churches glittering in the sun, the mill chimneys and the tower of the Polish church became visible. A highroad with telegraph posts from which the wires had been torn, ran through ploughed fields, with here and there hardly perceptible trenches disguised by straw. Not one living being was to be seen anywhere. The regiment galloped at full speed over the ploughed fields in four even ranks, in a shower of clots of heavy black earth thrown up by the horses' hoofs. The bright sun shone on the silver braid of the uniforms, on the horses' bits, on the unsheathed sabres, and the sleek coats of the horses.

The Borodin regiment, buried up to the eyes in the trenches, watched the charge, the rifles on the parapet, ready for action. As the Hungarian cavalry approached, the horses could be separately discerned and it became possible to distinguish the officers by their brilliant uniforms.

"Non-commissioned officers and best shots! Aim at the officers!" was the command given in the trenches at that moment.

The men in the trenches hardly moved, only a few bayonets were lifted from the ground.

Eleven hundred, nine hundred, seven hundred paces . . . and yet no fire from the trenches.

Count Muncaczy and his men felt secretly confident that the



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Russians had fled, and that the Hungarian division would thus have no difficulty in taking possession of the town!

"For the fame of Hungary, the King and Emperor! Hurrah!" shouted the Count in a hoarse voice turning towards his men.

And a mighty shout, which sounded strange to the unaccustomed ears of the Russians, was heard in the trenches.

"Aim at half-chest and hit," was the command signalled at the same time and one after another the shots fell at short intervals, until the whole long row of trenches was lit up by short flashes and a continuous crackling filled the air, the machine-guns adding their voices to those of the rifles.

Count Muncaczy's arab steed fell, hurling his rider to the ground. Horses and men lay motionless, covering the fields with blue and dark spots. The charge had failed and the regiment was all but annihilated. The few men who had survived fled to the woods pursued by the thin whizz of the bullets. Another regiment, met half-way, advancing to majestic waves, likewise overcome by terror, followed their example.

"Clean the rifles. Cool the machine-gun barrels," were the quiet instructions given to the soldiers in the trenches, as though nothing of importance had happened, and yet four attacks had been repelled.

Old Count Muncaczy was foaming with rage. He assembled the remnants of his regiments and, accompanied by his fifth son, the last offspring of his illustrious race, led the fifth charge himself. They got close to the trenches with a few men. At the very edge of the trench both father and son fell and those who leapt into it were captured alive.

Thus, on the first day of the war the best Austrian forces, the Hungarian cavalry division, succumbed in its foolhardy attempt at vanquishing the Russian infantry.

Peasants with spades were ordered by the district police to dig graves and collect the killed whose number reached two thousand. The representatives of the most illustrious Hungarian families were amongst the slain, but who cared about that here. The sanitary attendants stripped them of their silver-

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braided uniforms, sabres, and revolvers, and pilfered their pockets. The rifles and sabres were put into carts, whilst mounted orderlies and baggage-train soldiers ran about catching runaway horses.

The streets of Vladimir-Volynsk were sultry and smelt of baked rye-bread, sour cabbage-soup and black-gruel. Who cared that the half-clad corpse of a handsome old man with a grey moustache and by his side that of a youth with a cherub's face were lying close by the trenches and that the whole field was covered with fallen horses and men? The brass bell of the cathedral was droning loudly, calling the population to the thanks—giving mass to be celebrated by the local clergy, whilst a devil-may-care soldier's song rang from the far end of the street.

On the 1st of August the whole Russian cavalry was ordered across the Austro-German boundary as far deep as possible into the heart of the enemies' country to carry flames and devastation in order to paralyse their mobilization and to destroy their means of communication.

The other regiments of the division with their mounted batteries had been sent some way off to surprise the enemy, whilst Karpoff's Cossacks had received orders to stay by the infantry and protect it. The infantry, however, was still about forty miles off from the field of battle. Every day brought small, hardly noticeable, casualties, which would, in the infantry, where men perish by thousands, have passed unobserved: two killed, eight wounded,—five killed, twenty wounded,—two wounded,—but these casualties happened daily and by the time the infantry had come up, Karpoff hardly knew his regiment again; instead of fifteen to sixteen ranks, only eight to nine filed up. Half of the regiment had perished. The old brave Cossacks had been replaced by young new-comers, unknown to him, quite unlike the usual type of Cossacks. A large contingent of these formed part of the third squadron, commanded by the energetic and enterprising Kargalskoff.

"Who are these men?" inquired Karpoff in a dissatisfied tone.

"They're volunteers, Colonel," Kargalskoff answered.

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"Where do they come from."

"They enlist of their own free will. Local peasants, fine chaps and splendid fighters, no worse than the Cossacks and well acquainted with the country. They serve as guides and interpreters and help the grooms and cooks. They're entirely free, their villages having been taken and their houses burnt down or destroyed."

"But can they be relied upon."

"Most certainly. I answer for them."

Karpoff shrugged his shoulders. A painful feeling mixed with fear overcame him; hardly one month had elapsed since the war had been declared and one half of his well-drilled, famous regiment, his pride, was no more.

It was toward evening, while Karpoff was watching the grooming of his horses that Captain Kargalskoff turned up in the court-yard followed by a youngster of eighteen, clean-shaven, his cap at the back of his head. A lock of black hair protruded from under its shade. He was good-looking and had bold grey eyes. He was clad in a clean Cossack shirt with shoulderstraps, new Cossack trousers and well-polished boots. A sabre, a cartridge-pouch and a rifle completed his equipment. He looked smart and could hardly have passed unobserved. But Karpoff involuntarily lowered his eyes under the unabashed piercing gaze of the youth and thought: "What a repulsive expression this good-looking Pole has."

"What's your name?" he inquired.

"Victor Modjalevsky."

"Where from?"

"I'm a pupil of the Kholm college, and son of a citizen of Vladimir-Volynsk."

He spoke good Russian, but with a certain accent customary to foreigners, or to Russians who have passed many years abroad.

"He's a fine fellow, is Vitia," Kargalskoff remarked, "and has won the heart of all the Cossacks. He sings well, knows German and French. Yesterday he cross-questioned the prisoners in their own language."

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"Where have you learnt German?"

"At college," was the short reply.

"Has he been long with you?" Karpoff inquired, turning to Kargalskoff.

"For three days only. He joined us at Tchertovetz."

"Good," said Karpoff trying to get over the unpleasant sensation caused by the sight of the youth. "You can remain at headquarters."

"Yes, Sir," answered Modjalevsky looking Karpoff straight in the eyes.

During those three days he had heard enthusiastic praise by the Cossacks of their Colonel and whilst fixing Karpoff intently he thought:

"And slay the best of the gentiles. Slay—."

He turned on his heel, as he had been taught by the Cossacks and left the court-yard. Karpoff stood musing and trying to realise why the young soldier had, at first sight, impressed him so unpleasantly. "Am I doing him injustice? Is it on account of his bold look and seeming fearlessness? But he can't be blamed for that!"

## XVI

THE regiment in which Sablin served had been on march for four days. The night-bivouacs had been tiring. They had rested in small Polish villages, in poky and dirty huts, some on camp-beds, others on straw laid on the floor. The squadrons had been quartered in various places owing to the want of huts. Round about were nothing but marshes and forests. It had often rained and the ground was heavy and muddy.

Five days before the cavalry had left the train in which they had passed three days and were now hurrying on to enforce the J. army corps which was slowly retreating from Prussia, occasioning at the same time heavy losses to the German army. During those August days the Russian army helped to save Paris, sacrificing its own land and thousands of its best men.

Prince Repnin was in command of the regiment, Sablin commanded the first squadron, the first troop was led by Captain

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Count Blankenburg and the second by Captain Rotbek. Both squadrons had a large contingent of officers and were expecting the arrival of a number of ensigns only just promoted from the military schools and the Corps of Pages.

The villages they crossed were in full activity, the peasants doing their utmost to finish with as much speed as possible the thrashing of the grain. Here and there Sablin noticed things which proved the proximity of the war. He would come across a spacious, strongly-built Polish cart on high oaken wheels, drawn by a pair of big, well-groomed horses and laden with parcels and travelling-cases, coops with various fowls, amongst which ladies and young girls clad, some in town-dresses, others in peasant-garb, were seated. Then again he every now and then met boys and girls driving cows or geese, or dragging a well-fed pig behind them. The women's faces were sunburnt, their hair dishevelled, and their eyes bore traces of the unusual privations of the past days spent in unexpected peregrinations, in night-bivouacs under the shelter of their carts and in unforeseen emotion and fear; poor fugitives turned out of their homes and mercilessly abandoned to their uncertain fate. For strategical and other reasons the troops were retreating so as to allow the enemy to advance into Russian territory with a view to future successful military operations. Every time such chess-board moves took place, they brought about the dislocation of manifold households and the destruction forever of the social life of thousands of human beings.

On the approach of Sablin's squadrons the beladen carts would turn to one side, and it seemed to Sablin as though he read in the eyes of the wretched women a bitter reproach. A sensation of shame overcame him and he turned his head away to avoid their gaze. These fugitives opened to his eyes a new page of warfare. So far he had somehow had the impression that warfare affected the military class only, that they alone, officers and soldiers, were doomed to die the death of heroes, to lie in hospitals suffering from their wounds, they, who had sacrificed their life to warfare and its science, in exchange for the right of distinguishing themselves, of wearing a bright uni-



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form, of meanwhile enjoying life, the proximity of the Emperor and the love and admiration of the women. The care-worn faces of these poor women opened his eyes to a new life-tragedy; a peaceful existence destroyed and insulted, quiet happiness smashed to pieces. Awe and shame filled his soul, as though he were to blame for all this misery, he, whose duty it should have been to defend and save them from utter ruin.

The younger officers did not seem to realise the tragedy; they looked upon these scenes as incident to the general picture of war, casual and original adventures.

"Where are you bound for, charming 'Panenkas,'" exclaimed Ensign Pokroffsky sending kisses right and left.

"We are going to Warsaw," they answered smiling, but Sablin saw tears in those smiles.

"Why so far! We'll throw back the Germans and you can return to your homes."

"Oh, if that could only be true! May the Lord grant it!" muttered a stout old lady, seated on a hen-coop.

Sablin now noticed an officer trotting towards him from the village, followed by an orderly, and recognized ensign Lidval sent ahead by the quartermaster.

"Colonel," he reported, pulling up his horse, "the headquarters for the first and second squadrons have been reserved. Kindly authorize the officers to stay at the hall belonging to Pan Ledokhovski, who has invited us all to have dinner with him. He is very well off and owns a brandy-distillery, a sugar-refinery and a cloth-mill."

"I strongly object to being indebted to anyone!" rejoined Sablin gloomily. "Surely you could have found quarters at the village in some Poles' or Jews' houses against payment, without having to be under obligation to a complete stranger?"

"He is very rich," continued Lidval in a tone of entreaty, and he would feel so flattered. His house is full of beautiful Polish women; we could arrange a dance and enjoy ourselves."

"Why shouldn't we accept the invitation, Sasha," Rotbek broke in. "We'll get a chance of having a good wash and sleeping in fresh sheets. The house seems to be large enough and

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is sure to contain over a dozen spare-rooms. Far from intruding, we are sure to be received with open arms."

Unable to resist the looks of entreaty which he read in the eyes of his young officers, Sablin gave in.

"I consent," he said, "but on condition that one officer of each squadron remains by turns on duty with the men in the village."

"We promise, Colonel," was the reply echoed by the chorus of young fellows, who began joking gaily, making plans for picnics and other entertainments with the fair Polish girls.

### XVII

PAN LEDOKHOVSKI welcomed his guests on the front steps of his huge mansion.

"Pan Colonel," he began, mixing Russian and Polish words,— "please excuse our humble honour; do not blame us for not being able to provide a separate room for each of your officers. Owing to unforeseen circumstances half a wing has been placed at the disposal of refugee neighbours; the Voitzekhovskis, the Lioubitovskis, Princess Razwadovska with two daughters, Pan Lobyssevitch, Doctor Kaspilovski and most of them with their children."

"I am afraid we are putting you to great inconvenience," Sablin said stiffly.

"Oh, on the contrary. I am only too delighted at being honoured by your visit. I am, however, grieved at not being able to place sufficient comfort at the disposal of such distinguished guests. This way please."

A great fire-place, in which one could easily have roasted a full-sized boar, took up part of the huge hall, adorned with trophies such as stags' and roebucks' heads, and various horns with corresponding dates and names affixed. A double staircase covered with grey cloth carpets led from either side of the fire-place to the second floor.

"I'll show you to your rooms. It's now four o'clock. I'll send you some tea and sandwiches; and expect to dine with me at six o'clock, when I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to my wife."

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Sablin, accompanied by Count Ledokhovski and followed by his officers, ascended the stairs to the second floor. A long gallery, with windows on one side and large doors on the other, led from one end of the wing to the other. "This is your room, Colonel," said Ledokhovski, opening one of the doors and showing Sablin into a spacious double-bedded room. Thereupon, leaving Sablin to himself, he proceeded to show their quarters to the other guests.

The room was clean but somewhat musty and Sablin hastened to open the window, which looked out on a well-kept park with tidy lawns and flower-beds and a green meadow, crowded with carriages and carts. A massive coach on iron wheels stood at one side, and the horses, half unharnessed and fastened to the pole, fed out of a big sack of hay. In a cart, close by, two Polish women, seated on hay covered with carpets, were having tea from a tin tea-pot. A young Pole in shirt sleeves and braces was serving them. The women looked sleepy and dishevelled and their blouses were covered with hay. An empty calèche, two carts with household utensils, and, still further on, a long and narrow cart, laden with various articles and black-haired Jewish children, continued the file of vehicles. A frowsy old Jewess in a red shawl thrown across her shoulders sat at one end of the cart, supporting her chin with her bony hands, a look of unutterable grief in her eyes. A young, handsome woman in shift and petticoat, her bare white shoulders and breast glistening in the sun, was feeding a baby, remonstrating the while in a bilious tone with a grey-beard old Jew in a long frock-coat, who was dawdling by a melancholy-looking horse with protruding ribs.

Officers' orderlies passed to and fro carrying luggage into the house, and far away the faint sound of constant firing was audible.

Sablin's room was fitted in the "empire" style and furnished with antique and expensive but solid articles. Above the beds hung a valuable picture representing sunset in Venice and on the opposite wall two engravings: a seascape and a hunting scene.

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A neatly dressed chamber-maid in a white cap and apron brought tea and sandwiches which she placed on a table close to the sofa and then proceeded to lay clean sheets on the beds and fresh towels on the wash-stand.

She looked at Sablin out of her sly grey eyes.

"Do you think Pan," she suddenly exclaimed, "that the Germans are likely to come this way?"

Sablin looked at the girl without replying.

"Just listen how they're firing!" she went on, "some of our men have just returned from over there with the news that many lives have been lost. They say our troops are retiring."

Sablin still kept silent, ignorant himself of the general position.

"What will happen, great God, if the Germans come. My father is lying sick in the village. Where are we to send him? My husband has had to join, being of the reserve."

"In my opinion," said Sablin at last, "the Germans aren't likely to come this way. The fighting seems to be some way off."

The clinking of spurs and the sound of young voices came from the gallery.

"Politz, that's the one you should flirt with," cried Lidval, "see, what a fine fellow he is!"

"Pauline, rub my back."

"Get away, you naughty fellows."

"Pauline, are you a Russian? How is it that you speak Russian so fluently?"

Sablin closed the door.

## XVIII

At six o'clock a footman in livery knocked and told Sablin in Polish that dinner was served.

All the officers of Sablin's division and Count Ledokhovski's guests were already assembled in the large dining-hall, where the blinds had been pulled down and the electric light turned on. They were waiting for Sablin, the most distinguished of the guests. As soon as he passed the threshold the regimental band, disposed on the gallery, struck up the regimental march so un-

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expectedly for Sablin that he stopped short. Rotbek came up to him with a smile of contrition:

"Excuse me Sasha," he began, "for having disposed of the band without your permission. But you see, with all these young men and girls about, why shouldn't a dance be organized after dinner."

"Eh! Pik, Pik, always the same old game," he said, half reproachfully, and went up to the lady of the house. The Countess, in the forties, but stately and good-looking, was in evening dress and displayed well-shaped shoulders and neck. She either could not or purposely would not speak Russian and addressed Sablin in excellent French. Sablin answered in Russian, conscious though he was that it was bad form. The conversation lagged. Just then Anelia, the daughter of the house, a charming fresh-looking girl of seventeen with dark expressive eyes, a finely-shaped nose, delicate eyebrows and lips, came up to Sablin curtsying ceremoniously. She had been brought up in a French "convent" and spoke Russian with difficulty.

Sablin was introduced to the guests: Polish land-owners with long noses and glossy hair and their wives and daughters, some in rich evening dresses, others in simple travelling clothes. He noticed many a young and handsome face among the women. One of them Anelia Zboromirska, was presented as the most beautiful and gayest lady of the whole neighbourhood. She could have been barely thirty, while Pan Zboromirski was bald and old.

"The gayest!" thought Sablin. "How on earth can she be gay with such a husband?"

"Zakouska" and "Vodka" were served on a separate table which soon attracted the attention of all the guests. Sablin stood aside, having since the death of his wife pledged himself to total abstinence.

"Sasha," Rotbek exclaimed winking at him, "here's the fourth glass I'm emptying 'ad majorem Poloniae gloriam.' The brandy is first-class, distilled with some marvellous herbs. As for the sausage it's a very dream."

"Pani Anelia," Captain Artemieff, a tall and good-looking



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officer, was heard saying, "Just put your lips to my glass so as to enable me to read your thoughts."

She laughed, showing a double row of magnificent teeth and, threatening him with her small finger adorned with valuable rings, said:

"And why should you, Captain, wish to know the thoughts of a small Polish 'panienka.' They are dark, bad thoughts."

The band was meanwhile playing a selection from "Carmen," and the strains of Bizet's music excited both men and women, and no one thought of the war and of the proximity of the battle-field.

During the meal Ledokhovski, Sablin's neighbor, entertained him by talking politics, but Sablin listened gloomily and in silence.

"Have you heard of the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievitch's manifesto about the regeneration of Poland. What a generous, noble action: two fraternal nations joining in the defence of their mutual freedom against the enemy of Slavonism. I am certain that you have likewise a feeling of deep and innate hatred for the German race?"

Sablin did not answer, for at the bottom of his soul he felt no such hatred. He had no feeling of hatred for Vera Constantinovna nor had his sympathy for Baroness Sophie, whose husband, a Prussian officer, was fighting in the enemy's ranks, lessened in the slightest degree. The whole war seemed to Sablin a fatal misunderstanding.

He turned to his neighbour to the left, Countess Ledokhovska, seated at the head of the table.

"Comtesse, dites, avez-vous reçu votre éducation en Russie ou à l'étranger?"

"J'ai fait mes études au gymnase de Varsovie" answered the Countess, rejoicing at having induced the haughty Colonel to address her in French.

"Then it stands to reason," Sablin went on in Russian, looking at her with his soft grey eyes, "that you must speak Russian in perfection, like all society in the Polish capital."

The Countess muttered confusedly, in Russian:

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"But, Colonel, I've nearly forgotten my Russian."

"The tongue of the barbarians!" Sablin rejoined.

Presently Anelia Zboromirska, from the opposite side of the table, lifted her glass of sparkling wine and, looking at him with a charming smile which showed her pearl-like teeth, exclaimed:

"To victory, Colonel!"

Countess Ledokhovska joined in the toast.

"Yes, to victory! Defend us! Our manor, you know, is nearly two centuries old. Napoleon with his staff was a guest of our ancestor Count Ledokhovski in 1812, and the room he slept in exists still."

Count Ledokhovski joined in.

"This," he said, "is one of the most up-to-date estates in Poland. We have an electric plant, a sugar-refinery, a brandy-distillery, a cloth-mill—representing a value of many millions. Our picture-gallery contains a Teniers and a Rubens, a world-famed collection of Putermanns and van Dycks. I'll show them to you tomorrow. The Ledokhovskis have always been art-patrons and my great-grandfather, who spent most of his life in Rome, was a great friend of his Holiness. I'd rather die than part with this manor."

Ices were being served. Judging by the flushed faces of the young people and the animated conversation which was being carried on in French and in Polish, it was evident to Sablin that the consumption of wine had been abundant.

Rotbek never one moment left Pani Ozertitska's side, who gazed at him with amorous eyes. She was a plump and mature widow, and Rotbek, catching Sablin's eye, called to him across the table:

"Sasha, I'm following the line of minor resistance, incapable as I am of competing with the younger generation."

Pani Anelia's attention was divided between her neighbours, the tall and smart Captain Artemieff who attacked her deliberately and the modest Ensign Pokroffsky, who, abashed by her fascination, passively submitted to her advances. Both of them kept, by turns, filling old Pan Zboromirsky's glass, heedless of Pani Anelia's feigned protests, and the old gentleman ended by

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gazing about him with dazed eyes, emptying one glass after the other despite the sleepiness which was overcoming him.

### XIX

DINNER was followed by dancing. Two of the Company indulged in a brilliant Polish mazurka to the joy of the Polish guests.

"That I call a dance!" the Count exclaimed with enthusiasm, "not to be compared with all your modern cake-walks, one-steps and other monkey-dances—that's the monarch of dances!" and suddenly seizing his daughter's hand, he dashingly joined in the mazurka. At the culminating point of the dance a footman ran up to the Count with a message.

"Gentlemen," the latter exclaimed, "welcome news! More officers have arrived. I hope, Colonel, that you won't object if I ask them to join us?"

Sablin repaired to the entrance-hall, where fresh looking youngsters, only just promoted to join the regiment, were rid-ding themselves of their overcoats.

When Sablin made his appearance, they drew up in military style and introduced themselves one after the other.

"Colonel, I'm an ensign, Prince Grieven, just promoted, of His Majesty's 'Corps of Pages.'"

"Ensign Begretzoff, from the Nicholaievsky Cavalry School."

Olienin, Medviedsky, Likhoslavsky, Rosental—Sablin had known them all as children. He had known their parents. They all belonged to the best aristocracy of the Russian Empire. At the far end of the file, hiding behind the backs of his comrades, appeared a tall, handsome boy in a khaki soldier's tunic and a white belt with a heavy sabre attached to it—Sablin's son, Kolia. Sablin frowned.

"Kolia," he exclaimed, "what does this mean."

His son pulled himself up in front of him and reported, in a breaking bass voice:

"Your Honour, page of the junior special form Nicholas Sablin, commissioned to the regiment."

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"By whose permission."

"The Colonel's."

"I call this overdoing it, Kolia! Come along with me! Gentlemen," he continued addressing the newly-promoted officers. "I'll appoint you to the various squadrons. Meanwhile have a wash and then enjoy yourselves. Let's go, Nicholas!"

Kolia followed his father obediently.

Once in his room Sablin lighted the lamp and placed himself with his back to the window, while his son looked at him imploringly.

"Well, and how did you get here?"

"Father, I was staying with Granny at uncle George's in Moscow when the war was declared. I couldn't stay on for a minute longer. Uncle George quite approved, and said: 'It's your duty to die for your country.'"

"The old fool," exclaimed Sablin.

"Father! I have got leave until the first of September. Do allow me to remain. I want to see something of the war and to kill were it but one single German. I'm the best marksman of my form. Father—mother's no more. What's the sense of life. Don't be angry. Please give me your permission."

"And where's your sister?" Sablin inquired sternly. "Where have you left Tania?"

"Tania's gone to Kisslovodsk with Granny."

"And how's your grandmother? Did she consent to your leaving for the front?"

"Granny has had a lot of annoyance. Uncle insisted on her changing her family name to Volkoff. Granny got furious: 'I'm Baroness Wolff,' she said, 'and such I'll remain to my dying day. Tania set off crying at the thought that her grandmother was a German.'"

"Have you all gone off your heads over there?"

"Father, they started looting and demolishing the German shops and pulling the shields down."

"What savages!"

"Why father, there's nothing wrong in that: that's patriotism."

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Sablin shrugged his shoulders.

"Jolly patriotism!" he rejoined. "A Jewish 'pogrom' could just as well then be looked upon as an act of patriotism. What inveterate fools!"

"Uncle George joined the crowd," Kolia went on "He said that it served the Germans jolly well right; that they were a set of spies."

"Well, I'm blessed!"

Sablin was studying his son. At the bottom of his heart he rejoiced at his having joined the regiment and come to the front instead of remaining in Moscow looting shops, smashing windows and despoiling peaceful Germans who were not to be blamed for the war. He had acted in the true spirit of a Sablin.

His son stood in military fashion, his eyes bearing that expression of strength of will, of indomitable readiness to sacrifice his life for the sake of duty, which had characterized his mother. His features, the oval of his face, his finely-cut nose and delicate but firm lips likewise recalled Vera Constantinovna. The weight of solitude, which had not left Sablin ever since his wife's death, seemed lightened. It seemed to him as though his son had been sent by her to help him.

"Welcome, then, my boy!" said Sablin embracing his son. "So be it, stay on with me."

Kolia clung to his father's neck, with tears in his eyes.

"Father," he said, "we are alone. Mother is no more. Don't let us ever part again."

"Have you dined?"

"I'm not hungry."

"Well then make yourself smart and go join the others. Dance and enjoy yourself. You see how warlike it looks here."

He looked tenderly at his son's bare torso, as the boy stood drying his muscular arms and back with a towel in the full bloom of his healthy youth and telling his father all about his recent impressions in Moscow.

"You remember Kestner, the solicitor! Just fancy! He now goes under the family name of Kostretzoff. On our way here we decided to Russify Ensign Grieben by calling him Grivin.



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Doesn't it seem ridiculous? What has war to do with sympathy or feeling. I'm longing to kill a German and I wouldn't waver if I had to shoot my uncle von Schreintz as an enemy, although I love him and aunt Sonia. But then that's war."

Kolia went down to join the rest of the company, while Sablin remained in his room. Had he been able to, he would have prayed, but he had lost all faith in God. The night was dark, calm and mysterious. In the far distance the fire of casual cannon-shots flashed noiselessly like heat-lightning and it seemed to Sablin as though the flashes were now nearer than during the day, perhaps not more than twenty miles from the manor, behind the dark zone of the forest.

"Can it really be that our troops are retreating?" he thought. The strains of a waltz and the sound of animated voices came to him through the open window.

At eleven the band played the final march and retired and presently the voices of officers regaining their rooms resounded in the gallery.

"D'you know, Sandy," Pokroffsky was heard saying as he passed Sablin's door, arm-in-arm with Artemieff, "Anelia has promised me to open the door of her room at two sharp."

"What a rascal you are!" rejoined Artemieff, laughingly. "You want to make me cuckold!"

"What d'you mean?"

"Why she promised to let me in at mid-night on condition that I left her at half-past one, when she feared her husband might turn up."

"By Jove. That's splendid!"

"You seem both of you to be in for a love-adventure," said Baron Lidval. "Poushkareff and myself have decided to share Pauline."

"What do you say to Pik! Fancy his locking himself in with that stout Ozertitzka in the presence of us all!"

Artemieff and Pokroffsky started singing the duet from Hoffman's tales: "Oh, come thou night of love—impart us thy delights."

Kolia, gay and joyful, full of pride at the idea of being at

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the front and in the company of real officers, entered Sablin's room.

"How awfully jolly it is, father," he exclaimed. "And what a brick you are. A regular hero!"

### XX

TOWARDS dawn Sablin had a night-mareish dream. He dreamt that, fighting against a strong current, he succeeded in swimming across a wide, deep river whilst Kolia, who was swimming by his side, suddenly disappeared and was drowned. As, shortly before Marousia's death, he had had a similar dream, he awoke with a heavy feeling, as though some unavoidable calamity lay in store for him. With closed eyes he lay in bed under the troubling impression of his dream, until his attention was aroused by loud, uniform sounds which made the windows shake. Sablin opened his eyes. It was morning. The cannonade gradually increased, becoming more regular and louder. "That's our artillery," Sablin decided. The fire was answered by the distant, continuous rumbling of the German batteries. "Our artillery has approached during the night," thought Sablin, jumping out of bed. This meant that the Russian troops had retreated, that the enemy was having the upper hand, that the war he and his son had come for was now coming close. The night before had been passed in dances, flirtations and general enjoyment, while this very day, maybe, fighting, with all its fearful results, lay in store for them. Sablin turned to the bed on which his son lay smiling blissfully in his sleep. His well-cut features, his finely shaped nose and dark eyebrows reminded Sablin of Vera Constantinovna. He gazed at him, realising perhaps for the first time how deeply he loved him, and now his whole mind concentrated in the one hope, that nothing should befall his son until the end of August, when he would send him back as far away as possible from the horrors of war.

"Kolia!" he mused, "why have you come here?"

Sablin looked at his watch. It was nearly seven. Without dressing he went to the window and pulled up the blind. The sky was covered with low clouds which overhung the dark

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forests, and a drizzly rain was falling. On the meadow beneath the Polish women slept in the cart, sheltered by an improvised awning. A coachman was giving water to the horses fastened to the pole of the carriage, while the old Jew, assisted by a Jewish woman, was nervously harnessing a white horse. The other Jewess, handsome and young, was crouching on her heels by the side of a burning wood-pile and boiling something in a tin-kettle.

"They are leaving," Sablin thought, overcome once more by his anxiety for his son. He proceeded to dress when someone knocked at the door. It was his orderly, who reported that Prince Repnin wished to see him.

"Alexander Nicholaievitch," the Prince began, "you must collect your squadron and concentrate it at ten o'clock at the Vulka Shtitinskaya. I'm off to the Headquarters of the Army corps. I'll see you again on my way back."

"What's up?" Sablin inquired.

"Nothing special. Break up your night-quarters. They enjoyed themselves last night? Well, so much the better!" His orderly was awaiting Sablin in his room. Kolia was still asleep.

"They say, Your Honour, that our troops have been beaten. They're retreating," whispered the orderly.

"Who told you?"

"Stray soldiers have passed this way, evidently fugitives. It seems the Germans are advancing in large numbers backed by heavy artillery. There are reports that the majority of our officers have fallen and the infantry is demolished. No wonder! What's a soldier good for without an officer! Which horse am I to saddle for the young master?"

"Diana, father," said Kolia drowsily on hearing the last words. "Please, father, Diana. You're going to ride Leda probably?"

"But Diana is young and hot-tempered. She's likely to bolt with you."

Kolia sprang out of bed.

"Father dear, don't insult me. I'm the best horseman of my form and, besides, I know Diana's habits. Don't you remember

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that I rode her last year with mother at Tsarskoie Selo? She's such an intelligent mare. Semën, have Diana saddled for me."

"Well, so be it. Tell the sergeant-major to select the best of the spare horses for the newly-promoted officers, and instruct the orderlies to wake their officers: at half past nine they've all of them got to join their squadrons," Sablin said to the orderly, dismissing him.

"I can hardly believe, father, that I'm at the front. They're fighting already, the guns are thundering and so near too! Only yesterday it all seemed so distant and we had doubts as to whether it was the booming of big guns or the sound of thunder we heard. How jolly this is, father!"

At half past nine Sablin visited Count Ledokhovski to thank him for his hospitality.

"Is there any immediate danger, do you think, Pan Colonel?" The Count said, "I think it's perhaps wiser to send off the refugees further inland. I'll remain where I am and shall receive the enemy as my ancestor received Napoleon. The Germans are a civilized nation. They won't destroy the most up-to-date estate of the district with its sugar-refinery, brandy-distillery and cloth-mill."

"But aren't you of opinion, Count, that just owing to the value and the splendid condition of your property, with its numerous costly enterprises, it should not fall into the hands of the enemy in its present state."

"Then it's the duty of our troops to defend it."

"And if that can't be done?"

"Come, Colonel. I surely can't allow that everything belonging to me be destroyed; this property has been built up for two centuries. The picture-gallery alone, as I was telling you, is worth millions."

"Pack the pictures and have them carted off."

"Whereto?"

"To Warsaw, to Moscow—anywhere, and as far as possible."

"But when?"

"This very day."

"Pan Colonel, you must be joking! How do you expect that

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to be done? I should need cases and carts and that would mean at least a month's work!"

"Listen," said Sablin pointing to the forest, beyond which the cannonade was heard.

"Pan Colonel," exclaimed Ledokhovski turning pale, and looking at Sablin with blank eyes. "It's impossible, I'd sooner die."

"That's your look out. But my advice is—leave at once and take your wife and daughter with you."

They parted stiffly. Sablin had a feeling of unutterable anguish. "That was gratitude for their hospitality!" he thought, "abandoning them after having enjoyed their food, drink and entertainment. On the basis of strategical combinations! It would be better to die than desert them in this fashion."

The court-yard of the manor was in a whirl: coachmen hurriedly putting the horses to the carriages, maids and footmen carrying trunks and parcels. Fat Pani Ozertzitka, pale, with her dress in disorder, sat in a cart by the side of the driver, expostulating angrily with Rotbek, who stood smiling confusedly, Artemieff and Pokroffsky were helping Pani Anelia Zboromirska and her husband into a barouche. Pani Anelia was laughing gaily crying out:

"Don't be jealous one of the other, gentlemen, and don't challenge each other! It was mighty fine! To further conquests, panove!"

Pauline stood crying as she bade farewell to the blushing, bashful Bagretzoff.

The warm rain fell, monotonously drizzling. A smell of fresh dung and tar filled the yard, reminding the departing troops of the uncomfortable and dirty night-quarters and inn-rooms awaiting them.

## XXI

At Vulka Shtitinskaya the men disposed their horses in the various village yards without unsaddling them and loafed about in a state of inertia and uncertainty. The cooks prepared the



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mid-day meal. It had stopped raining but the weather still kept unsettled. No firing was any more to be heard.

The officers had crowded into a spacious house belonging to a Jew. The slovenly, though handsome-looking daughter of the landlord, a girl of about sixteen, was boiling water and getting lunch ready in a large and clean-looking dining room, assisted by a young, dark-bearded Jew, who stared at the officers.

"You must excuse me, Pani officers," the girl said, "but unfortunately we haven't enough of glasses. Some of you will have to content yourselves with cups. And then 'mammele' will only be able to serve you scrambled eggs and some mutton."

"That's all right, Rosa, don't you fret."

"You know, Sasha," Rotbek said, taking Sablin aside, "it's a bad sign that the firing has entirely subsided."

"You suppose that our forces have retreated?"

Rotbek nodded affirmatively.

"Either they or we. But if they were retreating, our guns would be renewing the fire in their rear, whereas you must have noticed how our fire has gradually subsided, while their cannonade seemed to increase, ending in a culminating, ominous roar. Has the Prince told you anything?"

"No, but I expect him presently."

"Well, then we'll soon be posted. Bye the bye, Sasha, that Pani Ozertitzka is quite charming. But for God's sake don't you ever mention anything about her to Nina. . . . She's so ridiculously jealous. . . . However, it was quite a little adventure. . . ."

Kolia was sitting at the corner of the table between Olienin and Medviedsky, with a serious frown on his face:

"There's nothing finer in the world," he said, "than a cavalry charge and to my mind a sabre-blow must be struck over the skull and not across the neck."

"Better still to use the lance," Olienin retorted. "You should have seen the Cossack non-coms of our school. A whole squadron could hardly keep up with them."

"Your Kolia is strikingly like his mother, isn't he," Rotbek

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remarked, "Nina and myself have not been blessed with children."

"And you regret it?" Sablin remarked, not without a tinge of irony. "I'd call you an old rake, if you weren't so young."

"Why? We are both of the same age!"

"No, my dear chap, life has aged me whereas you have so far succeeded in fluttering about like a butterfly."

"Maybe, and yet, when I look at Kolia, I say to myself how jolly it would be to have such a son. He's a charming lad, is your boy. You are giving him Diana? Do you think he'll manage her?"

"I should say so," replied Sablin with fatherly pride.

"Let's hear your 'junker' song," cried Captain Markoushine, a young officer of twenty-eight. "Remind me of the gay years of my youth and of my happiness." Kolia, blushing to the roots of his hair started the first bars of the ditty in a fresh, melodious baritone voice. Ten of the new-promoted officers from various ends of the table joined in.

"Kolia's got quite your voice and style of singing and is just as bashful as yourself. Bye the bye, do you remember Kitty?" Rotbek asked digging Sablin in the ribs.

Sablin left the remark unanswered. His face bore the same sad expression, as though every reminiscence seemed far distant and his life had come to an end.

Rosa brought in a dish of mutton and scrambled eggs and the famished youths fell to.

During the meal an orderly reported that the Commander of the regiment was in sight.

"Go on with your lunch, gentlemen," Sablin said, "while I have a talk with the Prince. I'll then invite him to have tea with us and introduce the newly-promoted officers to him."

"We paid our respects to the Prince yesterday on arriving at the regimental headquarters," said Prince Grieven.

So much the better."

Sablin left the house. The weather was improving and the sun glimpsed through the dispersing clouds, glittering in the pools. Prince Repnin, on a big hunter, was trotting up to the

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house, accompanied by his adjutant, Count Valersky, and some buglers.

"Good-day, Alexander Nicolaievitch," the Prince said, "Are all the officers here?"

"Yes, they are having lunch."

"Well, let's go into that hut. Bondarenko!" he cried to the old staff bugler, "just look inside and see whether there's anyone there."

They dismounted and Bondarenko hastened to the hut, from which he reappeared shortly reporting:

"There's only an old Pole with a small girl of four."

"Just chivey them out. Take the map along, Count."

The inside of the hut was dark and stuffy. A horse-collar, some straps and an awl lay on a low table. Count Valersky chucked them onto the floor and spread out a two-mile Russian map on the table.

"Just look about, Count, and see whether there's anyone here."

"Not a soul," the adjutant reported, after a minute inspection.

"The situation is as follows," Prince Repnin began in a low voice. "The N. army corps is retreating. At six this evening it will take up its position from Annenhof to Kamien-Korolefsky, as marked in red on the map. We must hold out until tomorrow night. The regiments of the guard are soon expected and the second division is approaching. You and your squadron are expected to cover the left wing of the army corps. You'll have to remain here at Vulka Shtitinskaya. The infantry advance guards are to remain ahead of you. You will have to organize a connection with them and tomorrow you'll have to send out reconnoitring patrols. Your duty will consist in observing and reporting to me and to the Commander of the N. infantry division. The whole army corps seems to be in splendid spirits and is sure to hold out. Though we have had heavy losses, the enemy has likewise suffered serious casualties."

"Am I to understand then that Vulka Lioubitovskaya and the manor, where we spent the night, are to be surrendered to the enemy?"

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"Yes. The Commander of the army corps has already commissioned the Cossacks to burn down the whole place to prevent the enemy from profiting by the factories and from finding shelter. A smart Ural Cossack captain has been entrusted with that mission, and he'll manage it first-rate. He left when I was still at headquarters."

"A fine way of thanking Count Ledokhovski for his hospitality."

"What's to be done, my dear fellow. The Count is not so much to be pitied: he owns two houses in Warsaw; but what's to become of the workmen and of the servants attached to the estate? That's where the tragedy comes in! Here lie the seeds of a great social question. The dissatisfaction created by the war and its calamities will affect all the classes of society. Retreat is a misfortune. Not in vain did Souvoroff maintain that defence led to defeat."

"Then why aren't we advancing?"

"Heaven knows. Either we are not strong enough or we lack sufficient initiative to risk it. So long, I'm off!"

"Won't you have tea, Prince?"

"No thanks. I'm fagged. I've been in the saddle ever since eight in the morning and am hurrying home. Put up a telephone connection with Zamoshë, mind."

"All right."

Sounds of gay talk came through the open windows of the Jew's house. Some saddled officers' chargers stood by the entrance-door, held by orderlies in cloaks thrown over their shoulders, the rifles sticking out of the sleeves. Diana, an elegant bay mare, looked about, as though complaining at being saddled with such an uncouth and heavy thing as a soldier's saddle.

"You can have the horses unsaddled," said the Prince, as he mounted his hunter.

The officers rushed out of the dining room into the street.

"How are you, gentlemen?" the Prince cried, greeting them by a wave of the hand. "Had you a good rest last night? Sorry I can't accept your invitation to tea. You'll excuse me,

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but I'm in a hurry to get home—if my modest hut can bear that name.”

And, riding his horse, he trotted off down the village street.

### XXII

AT four o'clock infantry regiments streamed through Vulka Shtitinskaya. They appeared quite unexpectedly and filled the village with dull sounds, with the clatter of tin-kettles attached to rolled-up overcoats and with the mingled smell of soldiers' boots and sweat. The whole village turned out to see them go by. The men marched with worn, pallid faces, silently fixing the dusty ground with their exhausted eyes. Their rifles were flung over their shoulders, the ranks were disorderly and out of step. Company after company filled the street, the empty field-kitchen rattling behind. An officer all covered with dust rode past on an ungroomed shaggy horse, followed by a soldier with the regimental ensign hung to the bayonet, and by a further compact grey mass of men with hands black with dirt and faces pale with fatigue.

The soldiers of Sablin's squadron came out of the huts and yards to see the infantry pass, gazing at them with looks of sympathy mingled with perplexity.

“What regiment, comrade,” one of the soldiers cried to the ranks, without obtaining an answer.

“Are you deaf, old chap. What regiment do you belong to?”

“An infantry regiment,” a voice answered from the ranks.

A couple of soldiers laughed at the joke while a fair-haired fellow, leaving the ranks, came up to Sablin's men:

“Give me a cigarette, there's a good fellow. I'm dying for a smoke.”

Several hands with boxes of cigarettes were stretched his way. The soldier lighted one and his face beamed with satisfaction.

“Are you retreating?” asked a cavalry soldier.

“The enemy's just simply driving us back. This morning we were even forced to charge with bayonets and succeeded in beating them off. A great number of them fell, but we likewise



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had heavy losses. They're much stronger. We've only got two divisions. We've been fighting for six days, and are short of cartridges. Their forces are continually increasing and they've got any number of machine-guns."

"Are you retreating for good?"

"No. We're going to fight again. Just you wait a bit, we'll end in beating them. We, Russian soldiers, don't fear bullets and cannon shots. We'll show them what stuff the Tchartorii-ski regiment is made of. And where do you come from, comrades?"

A new column approached the village, but in much better trim. The officers led the companies, looking glum, their arms behind their backs and their guns slung across their shoulders, as were the soldiers'. They were followed by a long string of artillery, the guns giving place to shrapnel cases and the latter again to guns. The guns were covered with dust and mud and again by shaggy horses likewise besmeared with dirt. The crews kept to the roadside, off and on exchanging casual words. Then again came more infantry.

Presently the compact ranks came to an end, but for another two hours straggling lots of ten to twelve men as well as stray solitary soldiers unceasingly loitered past, at times looking in at the huts. Some of them had a slaughtered hen or goose dangling behind their knapsacks. They looked animated, whilst some of them were undoubtedly the worse for drink.

"I say, comrade, d'you want a drink?" shouted a stolid, bearded soldier of the reserve, pulling a bottle of wine out of his pocket as he approached a group of cavalry men.

"Where did you get that from?"

"At the manor. The Cossacks are over there. By gad! They are drunk! They've emptied out the spirits into the ditch and have set the distillery on fire. They're hearty fellows, those Ural Cossacks, and don't grudge those who pass by!"

At seven o'clock a flame arose beyond the village above the elm-wood, disappeared, and was shortly followed in various spots by several others, which gradually increased, majestic and

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ominous. They extended, roaring and droning, till at last flying sparks and burning fire-brands became visible.

A drunken Cossack captain at the head of a troop of thirty men all laden with baskets of wine made their triumphant entry into the village, driving eight head of blooded cattle before them and followed by some young horses. The Captain stopped at the Jew's house where the officers of Sablin's squadron were quartered.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, sliding from his horse and nearly coming a cropper. "Oh, you skunk," he muttered hitting out at his horse that had shied. "You cursed fiend, damn you! Won't you have a drink in remembrance of the late squire?"

"What's become of Count Ledokhovski and his guests?" some of the officers inquired.

"Was he a Count into the bargain, damn him. Why, gentlemen, he was a German spy!"

"What's happened to him? Out with it."

"His guests drove away and so did his wife and daughter. The servants and workmen likewise bolted, Heaven knows where, when we arrived and announced that we were going to set fire to the place. As for him, he wouldn't leave. 'I'm going to keep watch on my pictures,' he says, 'you won't dare burn them.' What do you say to that! I tried in vain to persuade him, so I decided to leave him alone. We proceeded, my men and I, to prepare the straw, after having partaken of a jolly feast. He kept walking to and fro, laughing all the while. 'I forbid you to set the place on fire. Napoleon was a guest of my ancestors. I'll complain to the Emperor.' We just laughed without heeding what he said and he started laughing too. A spy—there can't be the slightest doubt. So we began our work of destruction. Let me offer you this bottle, Colonel. It's genuine fine champagne, with three stars on blue background, extra brand. I'm a connoisseur of brandy."

"For God's sake tell us what's become of Count Ledokhovski," Sablin interrupted impatiently.

"He's a fool, that Count of your's," laughed the Cossack captain. "He went to the picture-gallery and blew out his brains,

and he is burning there. Won't you really have some 'fine-champagne,' Colonel? An offering from the deceased."

"The demons!" Sablin was on the point of exclaiming, but he mastered his impulse and said stiffly:

"I thank you Captain, but I decline your cognac. As for you, gentlemen, I forbid you to accept any of this wine or to give it to your men. It was wrong of you, Captain, not to have rescued his body from the flames. I can imagine how distressed the Countess will be!"

"But he was a spy," muttered the Captain, "I assure you, a down-right spy. I could swear that a wireless telegraph was hidden in the gallery. However, as you please, though the cognac is an excellent old brand."

Sablin went into the Jew's house. The Jew and the young Jewish girl stood by the wall gazing at him with a look of terror in their eyes.

"War!" Sablin mused. "Good Lord, is that war?"

### XXIII

TOWARDS evening instructions came to keep in readiness for action. The horses were saddled. The men, massed together in the court-yards and in the hay-barns, slept a light and restless sleep, all the while on the alert for any unusual sound that might break the stillness of the night, which was clear, cold and twinkling with stars. At the door of each house stood a soldier on sentry, surveying the village road. The horses, disturbed in their night's rest, jingled their loosened curbs, heaving deep sighs, at times chewing the hay that lay before them, then suddenly stopping short, pricking their ears as though likewise listening to some uncustomary sounds.

The soldiers kept silent and pensive. The sense of war was to them vague and incomprehensible. The day before they had heard any amount of talk about killed and wounded without having seen any, as the route of evacuation led along the high-road, some way off. They felt no spite against the Germans, nor did they fear them. Some of them were tickled by the idea that, but a short while ago, a wealthy manor and a distinguished

Polish squire had existed close by and that now nothing had remained of either. However, all kept silent on the subject owing to a certain feeling of awe.

The officers were all assembled in the house belonging to the Jew. Neither they nor the hosts had settled to sleep. They sat about or went to and fro exchanging meaningless, empty words, at times going into the street and listening by the side of the sentries. The night sky was calm. The dark forests beneath were vividly outlined on the purple background of the horizon lit up by the smouldering ruins of Count Ledokhovski's manor.

"The auto dafé of Teniers' and Rubens' works," said Sablin earnestly, as he and Rotbek came into the street.

"And Count Ledokhovski's noble remains are likewise smouldering over there," Rotbek added in the same tone. "Which of the two losses is the greater, my dear Sasha? What a pity old Matzneff is not here; he would have philosophized for us."

"I was told yesterday by the Prince," said Sablin, "that Matzneff is not far from here, active in the service of the red cross motor-car section. Come on, let's go in-doors."

In the dining room a petroleum lamp with a flat iron shade burned brightly above the table. The officers drank of one glass of weak insipid tea after the other.

"It's just like at a railway-station when you're waiting for a night train which is late and when no one can tell you when it is likely to be due. Isn't it, Alexander Nicolaievitch?" Count Blankenburg remarked.

"Yes," rejoined Rotbek, "and the halting places of this train are unknown. The hospital, the surgical operation room, the world to come!"

So unusual did these words sound on the lips of such a gay and frivolous man as was Rotbek, that all present gazed at him with bewilderment.

"What's up with you Pik," Sablin exclaimed. "You seem to have inherited Matzneff's philosophical strain. You'd better let us hear a good yarn."

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"For non-smokers," said Lieutenant-Captain Markoushin.

"I believe I heard a shot. They're firing," said somebody.

There was a general silence. In the quiet of the night loud and distinct shots became audible no great distance off. Five machine-gun volleys rattled of a sudden, followed by a mysterious silence. Everyone went to the street and stood listening.

"Those last were ours," Artemieff remarked. "Maybe some enemy patrols have really come near."

"By God, it must be anything but pleasant being on the outpost, in the forest," said Rotbek. "It must be pitch-dark there."

"It only seems dark at first until you get used to it," Artemieff answered.

"What's the time," Rotbek inquired.

"Going on three."

"We ought to have some sleep. We may find it hard work tomorrow."

The officers proceeded to settle for the night. Rotbek and Markoushin lay down on the table, using their overcoats as pillows, some officers tried to make themselves as comfortable as possible on benches, others on chairs shoved together or on the floor. The Jew offered his bed to Sablin, who refused it and sat down by the window leaning his elbows on the window-sill. The officers, unable for a while to fall asleep, kept exchanging short insignificant questions and sleepy answers. The lamp was put out and the room sank into complete darkness, except for the dim outlines of the windows, through which the night threw its awe-inspiring gaze and the red light of a burning cigarette here and there.

Kolia slept on two chairs, his upraised arms supporting his head, with his cap for a pillow, and his legs in high boots and spurs tucked up on the chairs. A tender feeling again overcame Sablin, as he guessed, rather than saw, the outlines of his son's sleeping figure. He now knew that he had forgiven Vera Constantinovna, and that he could not but forgive her, were it only for having given him such a son. He mused on his son's future career and represented him mentally as a second edition of his own self but without his, Sablin's, defects and vices



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"Perhaps it's just as well that Kolia has come to the front. Maybe the severe school of war will save him from woman's fascinations, and that he will find his Vera Constantinovna and give her his undefiled and undisillusioned love without any preliminary Kittys or Marousias. And yet," he thought, "had there been anything to blame in Kitty and Marousia?" He was deep in memories of his past, when sleep unexpectedly overcame him.

When he opened his eyes a cold dawn had set in and the morning damp came in at the window. The kitchen-garden and the meadows outside glittered under the rays of the sun, as well as the gay and attractive-looking dark forest beyond, with its intermingled patches of young fir-trees. The sky was clear and blue with, here and there, feather-like pink clouds encircling the hardly perceptible crescent of the waning moon.

It was half past seven. The officers still slept in most awkward positions filling the stuffy room with snores.

Sablin stretched his limbs and glancing at the chairs which had served Kolia as a resting-place noticed that his son had left the room. He too went out into the yard.

### XXIV

KOLIA, in high spirits, his face flushed after a dip in cold water, was leaning his cheek against Diana's soft nose, calling her pet names.

He was offering her sugar on the palm of his hand but the mare, heedless of the sweets, playfully made attempts at catching his ear with her lips covering his cheeks with the hot breath of her pink, distended nostrils.

"Papa! What a dear Diana is! She knew me at once."

The boy exulted in his sixteen years, in the rapture of a fine summer morning and in the caresses of the young horse.

"Come, father, I'll show you the whole disposition: I know the exact spot from which it can be seen."

Sablin's orderly and a bugler followed them, as cleanly washed and as fresh looking as Kolia. Kolia led his father through the kitchen-gardens to a small meadow which sloped down into a

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wide valley opening the distant horizon to the view. To the right a wood, the outskirts of which were barely five hundred paces distant, sloped to the very boundary of the valley, extending in an even line northwards, towards the summit of a range of hills and dropping again, widening gradually towards the east. Fields, some yellow, newly gleaned, others black or covered with rich green grass, extended to the west. A red Polish church, the same that Sablin's squadrons had ridden past two days before, was perceptible some seven miles off. About two miles from the spot chosen by Kolia soldiers were seen moving about in a long grey row on the outskirt of the wood. As it was impossible with the naked eye to discern what was going on there, Sablin looked through his field-glasses. All along the outskirt, as far as he could see, sand was flying from under the surface of the earth in endless heaps, creating a yellow line of gradually growing trenches. Now and then a soldier would jump out of the dug-outs and run to the wood for branches and trees. Men laden with trees and boughs issued from the thicket and disappeared in the dug-outs.

Sablin scrutinized the position very attentively. He happened to be behind its left wing. He took note of a small hollow-way beyond the kitchen-gardens which seemed to be a suitable spot to dispose his entire squadron in reserve column. Small fir-trees rose from the hollow-way and joined the outskirt of the wood. An uncanny feeling overcame Sablin for a moment. He had no fear for himself, but felt unutterable anxiety for the fate of his son, his officers, of poor frivolous Rotbek, of his men and horses—of all that were dearest to him. However he soon regained confidence. What rôle could his squadron, a couple of hundred horsemen, play in that huge battle? They could only serve as an observing link. He had no intention of sending Kolia with the patrol, and surely there could be no danger for him in watching a battle from a distance of two miles! The enemy could never guess that a squadron was disposed in the hollow-way. He gave a sigh of relief and went on observing the infantry at work in the trenches.

"Still digging and digging," his orderly, Zaïkin, remarked,

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as he stood close behind him, taking the liberty, on the strength of his devotion to Sablin, of addressing his superior. "They started digging last night at ten o'clock. Smart chaps and not in the least afraid of the Germans."

Sablin gave orders to the bugler to fetch the commanders of the troops, and, when Rotbek and Count Blankenburg appeared, he pointed at the hollow-way and instructed them to have the horses led by the bridle to that spot and to form up in a reserve column, facing west.

"How about the enemy," inquired Rotbek.

"He's, so far, not to be seen," Sablin answered.

The troops soon filled up the hollow-way in close order. The soldiers lay down on the grass in the midst of the horses. Most of them, having past a sleepless night, soon fell fast asleep.

Sablin and his officers stood on the ridge of the ravine, watching by turns the infantry, which was bringing the trench-work to an end, and the western horizon, whence the enemy might at any moment turn up.

"Don't crowd together," said Blankenburg to the officers. "They may discover our presence."

The officers dispersed, but, involuntarily, again assembled in small groups.

The sun had risen higher and a bright morning had set in, making the distance more distinct and setting off the red brightness of the church on the background of green fields.

"There they are!" said Zaïkin, who had caught sight of the enemy with his naked eye.

"Where, where?" exclaimed several voices, and field-glasses were instantly raised on all sides.

"Over there, Your Honour, to the right of the church, by that ploughed field. You can't see them just this moment, they most probably have made a halt."

Sablin turned his field-glasses that way, his eyes dim with excitement. At last he discovered a man appearing from behind a large stone in the ploughed field, then another by his side, until a whole line rose athwart the field. Their uniforms of a special bluish-yellow tint proved them to be foes. Sablin had ex-

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pected to see black helmets with glittering brass ornaments, whereas their head-gear was grey and round. The figures looked square-shaped, advanced rapidly, carrying their rifles on straps and then suddenly vanished, having evidently again lain down.

An awe-inspiring strength and power seemed to emanate from their movements and Sablin was so much impressed by their aspect, that he found it hard to keep his legs from trembling with excitement. The officers had turned pale and looked at the enemy under strong tension troubled as they seemed by their sudden apparition.

"Over there our patrols seem to be retreating," remarked Zaïkin calmly.

"They're advancing in good order," muttered Blankenburg, with a heavy sigh.

"I've already counted five columns," Artemieff said.

The black field was clear again when Sablin looked through his field-glasses. The Germans had gone down a wide yellow stubble-field and one could distinctly see that they had casings on their helmets, that their guns were slung on straps and that they were advancing very rapidly.

"I can't make out why our men don't start firing at them," said Baron Lieser.

"They're too far off: at least two miles. Through the field-glasses they seem much nearer."

"The batteries, however, could surely reach them," objected Rotbek.

As if in answer to his remark the crack of a field-gun resounded to the right, behind the wood. The projectile rose above the wood, over the Russian trenches and a white cloudlet of smoke hung low over the yellow field, to the rear of the Germans.

After half a minute of suspense a second shot was heard, and this time the white smoke appeared just above the column, which however continued its even pace without quavering.

"How was that?" inquired lieutenant Koushnareff excitedly, "were any of the enemy hit?"

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"They're advancing," Blankenburg sighed.

"No, they've lain down. They're no more in sight," muttered Rotbek.

Just then eight shots resounded, at short intervals, shells flew noisily over the trenches and eight smoke-cloudlets flashed one after the other above the field.

"I believe, they've hit this time," exclaimed Ensign Pokroffsky, breathless with excitement."

"Can you see whether any of them have fallen," asked Artemieff.

"No, they're running forward and forming in line."

Roused by the firing the soldiers left their horses and ascended the ridge of the ravine to have a look at the advancing enemy.

"Their artillery is still silent," observed sergeant-major Ivan Karpovitch, as stout and as stolid looking as ever, but entirely grey-headed.

"I say, you over there! Don't make yourselves too conspicuous," cried Count Blankenburg severely.

The men retired.

"They have crawled out," growled one of the men, "but we mayn't."

From far beyond the fields with the red church four field-guns suddenly thundered, preceded by the hissing of four projectiles. All present involuntarily crouched and bent towards the ground.

"There, there they are," cried Zaïkin pointing behind the trenches, at the foot of the forest where four shells exploded, digging the ground and casting clods of black earth into the air.

"Shrapnel," said Rotbek.

"Well, gentlemen," exclaimed Koushnareff, "this means business, God help us."

Two batteries on the Russian side opened fire, and twelve shots accompanied by twelve flashes of exploding shrapnel rent the air with a deafening thunder. The shrapnel poured bullets into the enemy's ranks and one could distinctly see through the field-glasses how grey figures remained lying on the green



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clover, while others, wounded, crept back, and how the severely injured were carried off the field.

"The stretcher bearers seem to have had a narrow escape," said Pokroffsky, "they have chucked down the wounded fellow they were carrying and have bolted."

"No, they've returned and are picking him up again."

"It's probably their Commander," Zaïkin remarked, with a sigh. He saw with his naked eye as well as the officers did through their field-glasses.

"Have a look through the field-glasses," said Kolia. "You can see all the details most clearly."

"They're marching in wonderful order," remarked Zaïkin, as he looked through the glasses. "New columns are advancing from the rear, evidently reserve troops."

As far as one could see the fields to the west were covered with grey figures disposed as on a chess-board in seeming disorder but regularly and rapidly approaching the Russian trenches. Their number seemed so great that it was impossible to count their ranks. Advance columns presently appeared on the slope of the hill covered with straw stacks, and lay down, and simultaneously the Russians opened a hot fire; the fighting now began down the whole front.

## XXV

SABLIN noticed by the disposition of the rear columns that the main attack of the enemy was intended for the left wing, that is to say for the spot where his division was hidden. For one moment he thought that he could always retreat with his men, that, practically, there was no necessity for their staying there, but he at once chased away that thought which appeared to him cowardly. He went on following with nervous excitement the development of the great battle which was displayed to his view. He had not the slightest notion how long they had been in observation, or how late it was, but judging by the shadows of both men and trees, which had nearly disappeared, it must have been past mid-day. He looked at his watch: it was nearly two. He had been standing here ever since the morning without no-

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ting how time had flown and without feeling the slightest fatigue, and he had completely forgotten Kolia. From time to time, when the enemy's shrapnel came his way he unconsciously prayed mentally: "God help us! Lord have mercy upon us!"

Several shrapnel shells were directed upon the village of Vulka Shtitinskaya. The Germans had in view to smoke out the reserves which they supposed to be there. The whole village was thrown into a state of utmost confusion. The villagers rushed out of the houses half-crazy with terror, seizing at haphazard anything they set eyes on and, loading their carts with their belongings, hurried out of the village. The air resounded with the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cows and the cackle of geese and hens which were being caught and shoved into baskets and coops.

"Look, look, they've set it on fire, it's burning!" cried several officers, pointing to the flames that arose from the village.

"It's the house of that Jew that we were staying at," said Rotbek.

"Poor Rosa," Pokroffsky remarked.

The enemy stopped firing at the village, having evidently ascertained that it contained no troops. As for the cavalry squadron it was seemingly considered unimportant.

From behind the enemy's right wing, about three miles off, a German battery presently came in sight. It descended into a hollow-way visible to the naked eye from where Sablin and his officers were posted, but hidden from the view of the infantry, took its position to the left of the Russian trenches and immediately opened fire.

"Heavens! Just look," exclaimed Markoushin, "they've hit."

A column of dark smoke emerged from the Russian trenches and beams and planks flew up into the air, giving to the overwrought imagination of the spectators, the impression that they were accompanied by human legs and arms.

All the field-glasses were concentrated in that direction. The battery now fired without missing and the line of trenches was soon turned into a row of formless pits emitting clouds of black smoke. In their anxiety to escape the men rushed out of the

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trenches seeking shelter in the wood, but were overtaken by exploding shrapnel. The enemy's infantry now opened an incessant fire very feebly answered. Sablin had to witness the destruction of the most important section of the Russian position. The enemy's infantry was preparing to attack the flank of the trenches.

Sablin paced nervously to and fro, unable to make up his mind how to act. Should he send his dismounted squadron to extend the line of trenches? But what could one hundred and forty dismounted horsemen, inexperienced as infantry-men and without the shelter of dug-outs achieve, where battalions of trained infantry had proved unsuccessful?

"That blasted battery, that damned battery," he muttered, as he grew more and more nervous. A bullet whizzed close past him, without his paying any attention. "That damned battery, it must be destroyed; but how?"

By a cavalry charge?

Sablin laughed at the idea. Was it possible to risk a cavalry charge across an open field into the mouths of a battery? That would have been all right at field exercise at Krassnoie Selo, against blank fire. He stopped to have a look at his squadron. The officers had retired to the hollow-way, for fear of drawing the attention of the enemy and stood in a small group in front of their troops. Sablin could distinguish every one of his officers and men and his heart bled at the thought of sending them to certain death, of sacrificing his whole command, probably in vain. His mission was to watch. He had without delay reported when the battery had appeared, had even made a sketch of its position and it was now his duty to wait until the infantry retreated and then retire to a safe spot.

Calmed by this decision Sablin resumed his pacing from the foremost fir-trees of the thicket to the ridge of the hollow-way, but felt sick at heart. His reasonable decision to remain passive worked on his mind, causing him actual physical pain. Whenever he pictured to himself the cavalry charge, he fell into a state of fever, his pulse beat faster, and he had to restrain his im-

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pulse by mentally convincing himself that he would be committing a folly.

"Intrepidity must go hand in hand with prudence," he said to himself. "I would be responsible to God and to my mother-country, were I to lead to destruction these noble men."

Laughter from the hollow-way attracted his attention. Rotbek was wrestling with lanky Artemieff, and the officers and soldiers stood around keenly watching the result, as though they had completely forgotten the seriousness of the moment.

"How could I take upon myself to lead those men to certain death?" thought Sablin, shaking his head.

He was on the point of turning from the wood to join his officers in the hollow-way and watch the wrestling-match by way of diverting his thoughts from the battle, from the accursed battery and from the uncertainty which tortured him as to where his duty lay, when he noticed a soldier of his regiment on a heavily breathing horse all covered with foam making his way through the bushes of the thicket and waving a paper from afar.

The soldier was afraid of riding into the open space where bullets were whizzing past. He dismounted and tied his horse to a tree. Sablin went to meet him.

"An order for Your Honour, from the Commander of the regiment."

It took Sablin some time to tear open the envelope: his hands trembled and his fingers refused to obey. At last he pulled out the order written in the Prince's firm and legible hand:

"A four-gun battery has been established by the enemy on your left flank, facing you. It is causing our infantry too heavy damage, thus threatening the issue of the whole battle. You must destroy that battery. God help you." It was signed "Major General Prince Repnin, of his Majesty's Suite."

The note epitomized Prince Repnin's dry, cold nature, a man who considered duty and discipline above anything else. He hadn't omitted one single comma and all the words were written with the same even stroke of the pencil. "And yet he

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knew that the order meant certain death," thought Sablin as he left the soldier, with a frown on his brow.

"Please, Your Honour, I must have that envelope back," exclaimed the soldier.

"Right you are. I'd nearly forgotten," replied Sablin as he wrote the following words on the envelope: "We shall do our duty. Sablin," and adding the exact hour: 15:42 p. m., passed it on to the soldier. He then went to his squadron, which, though no change had occurred, impressed him as being quite different. The sky, the sun and the distant landscape seemed small, dim and flat like a scenery. The droning of the field-guns and the rattle of the machine-guns sounded indistinctly to his ears. His mouth was dry and he felt as though he would be incapable of uttering a single word. His gait was erect and elastic, but his face was as white as a sheet and his eyes were wide-open and seemed to look into vacancy.

As he was stepping down the slope he cried:

"Squadron, to your horses."

He gave the command in his usual sonorous voice, but it seemed to him as though it had been uttered in a dull and indistinct way by someone else.

"Troop, to your horses!" shouted Rotbek.

"To your horses," echoed Count Blankenburg.

Everyone understood what that command meant; all turned pale as sheets, and mechanically fulfilled their duty.

Zaïkin ran up to Sablin, Leda trotting after him and endeavouring playfully to seize his rifle with her lips. Sablin jumped into the saddle, and without unsheathing his sabre, raised his riding-stick above his head.

"Squadron, mount!" he commanded with his usual firm voice. Once in the saddle his strength had returned.

"First troop!" cried Count Blankenburg.

"Second troop!" shouted Rotbek.

"Mount!" they commanded simultaneously.

Various consecutive orders were delivered, and the clinking of lances and jingling of stirrups resounded as the men formed up in lines.



## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

"Sabres ready for battle! Lances to the hips! Attention!" was Sablin's next command.

The sabres glittered in the sun-shine and the lances bent towards the horses' left ears.

"In echelon of platoons, in one column and in divided ranks, at six paces distance," Sablin went on, while Blankenburg and Rotbek repeated his orders.

"To the battery!"

"To the battery!" Blankenburg and Rotbek echoed.

"The first ranks at a trot!"

"Forward!" the command resounded, and the first ranks opened up in the hollow-way and rapidly began ascending its slope.

Blankenburg, accompanied by a bugler, rode on the right, while Rotbek kept on the left.

Sablin gave Leda her head and galloped in front of the first two ranks. Close behind him, to the right of the bugler, Kolia was following, with difficulty restraining Diana. But Sablin did not notice him.

## XXVI

THE German battery had not, at first, noticed the approach of the cavalry charge. The men were busy firing at the trenches, preparing a definite blow which would enable the German infantry to attack. Sablin had succeeded in crossing a wide dale and reaching the top of the hill without having attracted the attention of the enemy. A huge stubble-field spread out in front of him and he could now distinctly discern the battery with its convoy company. The battery was firing at half-turn to the left and Sablin could see the yellow flashes and the men fussing around the guns.

"At field-gallop!" Sablin commanded but his men had already started at full speed, without awaiting the command.

The guns boomed heavily and some shells exploded somewhere in their rear. Sablin could now see individual men in grey helmets running to the ammunition cases and carrying glistening ammunition, he noticed an officer standing erect be-

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hind the middle of the battery and the strangely-shaped guns pointing their mouths upwards. An uncanny sort of whiz was nearing from ahead but Sablin did not even think of asking himself whether it was the wind whistling or the sound of bullets. Rotbek overtook him on his left-hand side with uplifted sabre, as though preparing to cut a blow. Sablin noticed the flash of a flame followed by a white cloud close to Rotbek, saw Rotbek's horse fall and when he galloped past, Rotbek was lying face-downwards on the ground, a flow of blood streaming from the lower part of his body.

"Pik's leg's been blown off," he thought, without being in the least impressed.

The entire battery now came in sight. The men were in a state of excitement and seemed to be at their wits ends. The convoy company fled in disorder.

A fine bay horse, in which Sablin recognized Diana, galloped past with flowing mane, but he hadn't time to realise what it meant that Diana was riderless, when he felt a frightful blow in the chest. It seemed to him as though his horse had stumbled throwing him to the ground. Black earth cooled his flushed face and crept into his mouth. He raised his head. Soldiers were speeding past him on their heavy horses, and shouting hurrah. Rank after rank flew by, filling Sablin's ears with the thundering sound of horses' hoofs. He failed to realise what had happened.

"I'm wounded, I'm killed," he thought, as he saw the blue fathomless sky above his head, while myriads of small transparent bubbles swam before his eyes, blinding him. He closed his eyes and swooned away.

Count Blankenburg was the first to reach the battery. With a blow of his sabre he felled a soldier who was aiming his revolver at him. His troop and that of Rotbek under the command of Lieutenant Markoushin, who had replaced Rotbek, surrounded the guns and mercilessly revenged themselves on the enemy.

To the right a formidable hurrah rent the air. The infantry had left the trenches and was pursuing the retreating Germans.

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About half a mile to the left, as far as one could see, the field was covered with horsemen galloping on black horses: the second squadron, arrived in time to join in the fray, was likewise pursuing the fleeing enemy. The victory had been complete and the Russian army was indebted by that victory to the intrepid charge of Sablin's squadron. Sablin himself, seriously wounded in the chest, lay unconscious on the battle-field. His son, Kolia, lay two paces off in a pool of smoking blood, his body wrecked by shrapnel and headless. Lieutenant Artemieff, Ensign Baron Lieser, Ensign Pokroffsky, Lieutenant Agapoff had been killed, Lieutenant Koushnareff, Baron Lidval and Count Toll were wounded. Of the six newly-promoted officers who had arrived two days before, three, Prince Grieven, Olienin and Rosental had fallen, two, Medviedsky and Likhoslavsky, were wounded. The casualties among the men were three killed and sixty wounded.

When Captain Count Blankenburg collected the squadron after the capture of the battery, each troop showed barely two platoons. Ivan Karpovitch, the sergeant-major, had been killed at the very battery just as he was felling its Commander.

Whilst the remnants of the command were being formed in platoons, Prince Repnin came trotting across the field. His face was calmly majestic. His horse looked nervously askance at the bodies of the men and horses lying scattered about.

"I thank you, my good fellows, for your gallant charge. I congratulate you with your glorious dead."

"We are ready to serve you, Your Honour," shouted the men, still pale and breathing heavily.

"Where's Colonel Sablin," the Prince inquired.

"Killed," Count Blankenburg replied.

"No, wounded," said Markoushin. "I have just seen him carried past; he was moaning."

"It was a gloriously intrepid deed, gentlemen," Repnin went on. "You've made our regiment illustrious forever."

He dismounted and wearily walked to the edge of the high ridge.

"Count, lead the men to the regiment at Zamoshië," he said

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to Blankenburg and, turning to the adjutant: "Give me the report-book, Count," he went on, "we must send a cable to His Majesty informing him of the famous and glorious victory."

Prince Repnin gazed at the field on which carts and hospital-cars were driving to and fro and sanitary assistants were picking up the wounded.

"A brilliant deed," he muttered, "a brilliant deed. How many lives of the pick of young Russia it has cost! May Russia, may the whole world know that our nation is united, that our officers are capable of dying together with and ahead of their soldiers. The solemn hour of liquidation has struck, when we must make up in the eyes of the people by paying in full for our privileged position, for our wealth, our landed estates, our luxurious and gay life in time of peace. May the Emperor and the whole of Russia realise that fathers have sacrificed their sons on the altar of their mother-country and have themselves fallen at their side. Poor Sablin! Does he know how tragically his son, that fine youth, met with his death and how mutilated he was? What a merciless fate seems to pursue him! Only a month ago he lost his wife under most tragical circumstances and now he is deprived of his son. Would it not perhaps be better for him to die likewise? What is he to live for now?"

"Fame," exclaimed Count Valersky in a voice full of pride and solemnity, which sounded unusually clear in the stillness of the air. Corpses lay on the field. The wounded moaned and yelled, endeavouring to attract the attention of the hospital corps. The earth had not yet absorbed the pools of blood, the fallen horses lay about with hideously swollen bellies. But that great word seemed to chase away the doleful picture of the field of death.

"The glory of his valiant deed is left to Sablin," the adjutant went on, "whether he dies or is spared, this date, on which the cavalry charge led by him has ended in our brilliant victory, will forever shine with an inextinguishable brightness."

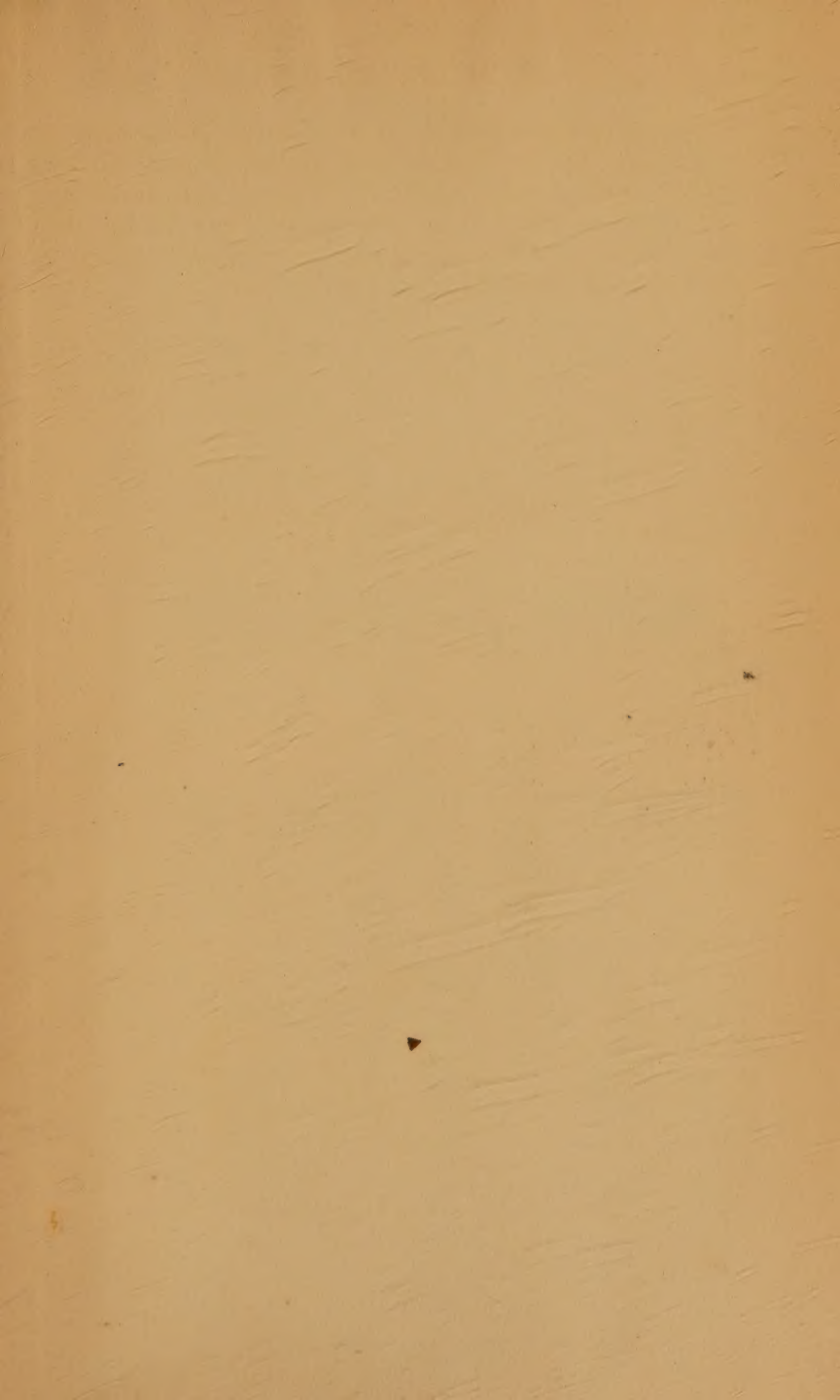
"So be it," said Repnin. His stern face took a solemn expression. He rose from the ridge on which he was seated, made a sign to the orderly to approach, mounted his horse, and taking

## FROM DOUBLE EAGLE

off his cap, rode past the killed down the field. The setting sun threw a long shadow from his slim and erect figure. His dry features reflected whole generations of heroes, who had looked upon fame and valiant deeds as being dearer to them than life, upon devotion to their Emperor and to their mother-country as standing much higher than their individual welfare.

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